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J A C Q U E S.

BY

GEORGE SAND,

AUTHOR OF CONSUELO, LA COMTESSE DE RUDOLSTADT, ETC., ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY ANNA BLACKWELL.

IN TWO VOLUMES,

VOL. I.

SECOND EDITION.

NEW YORK:

J. S. REDFIELD, CLINTON HALL.

1847.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1846,
By ANNA BLACKWELL,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for
the Southern District of New York.

PQ
2455
J212
1847

TO

M. AND Mde. A. FLEURY.

MY FRIENDS: I dedicate to you a book, for which I pray you to forgive me. Correct the pages wherein I have spoken of conjugal love, and tear out the conclusion of the plot; for, thanks to Heaven and to yourselves, you will find it very improbable. I have finished this book at the foot of a glacier: you will read it, smilingly, beside a good fire, or upon the fresh spring grass around our old hut.

GRAND ST. BERNARD, *July*, 1834

**THE MAN WHO, THROWS AWAY HIS LIFE TO AVENGE AN INSULT, HAS ONLY
COURAGE; TO FORGIVE, WITH NOBLENESSE, REQUIRES A HIGHER VIRTUE:
ABNEGATION.**

JACQUES.

I.

TILLY, near Tours.

You wish, my friend, that I should tell you the truth; you reproach me for being too *mademoiselle* with you, as we used to say at the convent. I must absolutely, you say, open my heart to you, and tell you whether I love Mr. Jacques. Well, then—yes, my dear; I love him, and very much. Why should I not confess it? Our marriage contract will be signed to-morrow, and in less than a month we shall be united. And now be comforted, and do not be any longer troubled to see things progress so fast. I believe—I am fully persuaded—that happiness awaits me in this union. You are foolish with your fears. No! my mother has not made me the victim of her ambition of forming a rich alliance. It is true, that she is somewhat too keenly alive to this advantage, and that, on the contrary, the disproportion of our fortunes would render the idea of owing everything to my husband, humiliating and painful to me, if Jacques were not the noblest man upon earth. But knowing him as I do, I feel that I have reason to rejoice in his wealth. Without it, my mother would never have forgiven him his plebeian extraction. You say that you do not like my mother, and that she always impressed you with

the idea that she was a wicked woman. You do wrong, it seems to me, to speak to me thus of one to whom I owe both respect and veneration. I see that I have been to blame; for I have led you to form this judgment, through my weakness in repeating to you the little vexations and petty annoyances of our intimacy. Do not again expose me to this remorse, dear friend, by speaking unkindly of my mother.

The amusing part of your letter (which *that* certainly is not), is the sort of suspicious penetration with which you half guess at things. For instance, you fancy that Jacques must be an old man—cold, dry, and smelling of the pipe; and really there is some little truth in this description. Jacques is not in his earliest youth, his exterior is calm and grave, and he smokes. You see what a happy thing it is for me that Jacques is rich; for, were he poor, would my mother ever have tolerated the sight and the smell of a pipe?

The first time that I saw him he was smoking, and therefore I always like to see him occupied in the same way and in the same attitude as then. It was at the Borels'. You remember that M. Borel was a colonel in the lancers *in the time of the other one*, as our peasants say. His wife never would cross him in anything; and although she detested the smell of tobacco, she dissembled her repugnance, and by degrees has accustomed herself to bear it. I am not, however, in any need of her example to encourage me to be forbearing toward my husband; I have no dislike to this smell of a pipe. Eugénie allows M. Borel and all his friends to smoke in the garden, in the parlor, wherever they please. She is quite right. Women have sometimes a way of making themselves troublesome and disagreeable to the men who love them best, for want of a slight effort to bring themselves into conformity with their tastes and habits; yet they, on the contrary, impose upon their husbands a thousand little sacrifices, which are like pin-pricks to domestic

happiness, and which gradually render family life insupportable to them. Oh! but here I hear you laughing aloud and admiring my sentences and my excellent intentions! What would you? I am in the mood to like all that is pleasant to Jacques; and if the future should justify your evil predictions—if, some of these days, I should cease to love in him all that pleases me to-day—I shall at least have tasted the honey-moon! The wiseacres of the county are terribly scandalized at this way of living of the Borels. Eugénie laughs at them with good reason, for she is happy, beloved by her husband, surrounded by devoted friends, and rich enough to take her own way; on which account, moreover, she is favored, from time to time, with the visits of the proudest of the legitimists. My mother herself has given way to these considerations, as she now does in the case of Jacques; and it was, in fact, to Madame Borel's that she went to scent out the track of a husband for her poor, portionless daughter.

But this is too bad! You see how, in spite of myself, I am again beginning to make fun of my mother. Ah! I am still too much of a school-girl. Jacques will have to cure me of this—he who never laughs all the days in the year. Meanwhile you ought to scold me, instead of seconding me as you do, you naughty one!

I was going, then, to tell you that it was there I saw Jacques for the first time. For a fortnight nothing had been spoken of at the Borels but the expected arrival of a Captain Jacques, an officer retired from service, the inheritor of a million. My mother opened eyes as big as windows, and ears as wide as doors, to take in the sound and the sight of this beautiful million. As for me, all this would have prejudiced me strongly against Jacques, if it had not been for the extraordinary things which were said of him by Eugénie and her husband. They were never weary of telling of his bravery, his generosity, his goodness. It is true, they also attributed to him some singularities. I

have never been able to obtain any satisfactory explanation on this subject, and I seek in vain in his character or manners for anything that could have given rise to such an opinion. One evening this summer we went in to Eugénie's. I really believe my mother must have perceived something in the air which informed her of the arrival of the *prize*. Eugénie and her husband had come into the yard to meet us; they seated us in the parlor; I was close to a window which opened on the floor, and there was a half-drawn curtain before me. "And has your friend arrived at last?" asked my mother, at the end of two or three minutes. "This morning," replied M. Borel, with a joyful air.—"Ah, I congratulate you; I am delighted for your sake," returned my mother. "Shall we not see him?"—"He went off with his pipe on hearing you come in," replied Eugénie; "but he will certainly come back again."—"Oh, perhaps not," said her husband; "he is as untamed as an inhabitant of Oronoco (a favorite comparison with M. Borel), and I have not yet had time to tell him that I want to introduce him to two fair ladies. We must see that he does not wander too far away, Eugénie, and give him notice." All this time I said nothing, but I could very well see M. Jacques through the opening of the curtains. He was sitting about ten paces from the house, on the stone steps on which Eugénie, in the spring, arranges the beautiful pots of flowers from her conservatory. He seemed to me, at the first glance, to be, at the outside, twenty-five; although he really is at least thirty. You can not imagine a face more beautiful, more regular, and more noble, than that of Jacques. He is rather under the middle size, very delicate, although he says that his constitution is excellent. He is always pale, and his hair, which is black as ebony, and which he wears quite long, makes him look still paler and thinner. It seems to me there is something of sadness in his smile, of melancholy in his glance, serenity in his brow, and pride in his movements; throughout, the expression of a proud

and sensitive soul, of a destiny rugged, but vanquished. Do not tell me that I use the phrases of romance. If you could see Jacques, I am sure you would find in him all this, and many other things which I have not yet seized, for I still feel a wonderful timidity when with him; and it seems to me that there are in his character a thousand peculiarities which it will take me some time to get acquainted with, and perhaps to understand. I will describe them to you from time to time, in order that you may help me to judge of them correctly, for you have much more penetration and experience than I. Meantime, I will tell you of some of them.

He has certain likings and certain dislikings, which he takes suddenly, in a way which is sometimes rude, sometimes romantic, at first sight. I know well that every one is thus affected, but no one gives way to these impressions so blindly, or persists in them so obstinately, as Jacques. When, at the first glance, he has received an impression strong enough to enable him to form a judgment, he declares that he never retracts it. I fear lest this may be a mistaken idea, and a source of many errors, perhaps of injustice. I will even say that I fear he may have formed this sort of judgment of my mother. It is certain that he does not like her, and that she displeased him from the very first day; he has never told me this, but I have seen it. When M. Borel drew him from his revery, and from the cloud of tobacco-smoke, to present him to us, he seemed to come against his will, and saluted us with freezing coldness. My mother, whose manners, as you know, are proud and chilling, was uncommonly amiable with him. "Allow me to take your hand," said she to him; "I knew your father well, and you, also, when you were a child."—"I know it, madame," replied Jacques, drily, and without moving his hand toward my mother's. It seems to me she must have seen it, for it was very marked; but she is too prudent and too skilful to allow herself to be placed in an

awkward position. She pretended to look on the repugnance of M. Jacques as timidity, and insisted, saying, "Give me your hand; I am an old friend of yours."—"I remember it well, madame," he replied, in still stranger tone; and he grasped my mother's hand almost convulsively. All this was so singular that the Borels looked at one another in astonishment; and my mother, who is by no means easily disconcerted, fell, rather than seated herself, upon her chair, and became pale as death. A moment after, Jacques returned to the garden, and my mother called upon me to sing a song of which Eugénie had spoken. Jacques has since told me that he listened to me under the window, and that my voice seemed to him at once to be so sympathetic that he came in again to look at me. Until then he had not seen me. From that moment he loved me, at least so he says. But I am speaking of something else than what I meant to say.

We were upon the subject of Jacques' singularities. I will tell you of another of them. The other day he came to see us just as I, equipped in a blue calico apron, was leaving the house with some soup in an earthen porringer. I had gone out by the back door, that I might not meet any one in this elegant costume. As chance would have it, it happened that M. Jacques, through a caprice worthy of himself, had come into this narrow lane with his horse. "Where are you going in such a style?" said he, leaping from his horse and barring the way. I would gladly have avoided him, but it was impossible. "Let me pass," said I, "and go and wait for me in the house. I am carrying food to my chickens."—"And where, then, are your chickens? Parbleu! I should like to see them fed!" He threw the rein on the horse's neck, saying to him, "Fingal, go to the stable;" and his horse, who understands him as though he were acquainted with the language of men, obeyed him immediately. Then Jacques took the porringer from my hands, raised the cover without ceremony, and seeing a very

good-looking soup, "Diable!" cried he, "you feed your chickens very well! Oh, yes, I understand; we are going to some poor person. You need not make a secret of that with me; it is a very simple thing, and I like to see you doing it all alone. I will go with you, Fernande, if you will permit me." I slipped my arm under his, and we walked on toward the house of that old Marguerite of whom I have so often spoken to you. M. Jacques carried the soup all the way with his gloves of straw-colored chamois-leather, and with an air of as much ease as though he had done nothing else all his life. "Any one but myself," said he, as we went along, "would certainly take this opportunity of paying you some magnificent compliments—would praise, in prose and in verse, your charity, your sensibility, your modesty. As for me, I shall say nothing of the sort, Fernande; because I am by no means astonished at seeing that you practise those virtues which you possess. A want of sweetness and of compassion would be horrible in you, for then your beauty, your air of candor, would be detestable falsehoods of nature. On first seeing you, I at once judged you to be sincere, just, and holy. I did not need to meet you on your way to a cottage to know that I had not been deceived. I will not say, then, that you are an angel because you do these things, but I say that you do these things because you are an angel."

Forgive me for repeating this conversation. You will think, perhaps, that there is a little vanity in my thus telling you of the honeyed speeches of M. Jacques. And in fact, my good Clémence, I believe there is a little; I am indeed proud of his love; laugh at me as much as you choose, that will make no difference.

But am I not right in relating to you all these details, since you are desirous of knowing all the particulars of my love, and of the character of my betrothed? You will hardly scold me this time for being too laconic. I will go on with my story. At length we reached Mother Mar-

guerite's. The good dame was quite astonished to see her soup brought in by a handsome gentleman in straw-colored gloves. And now she overwhelmed me with her usual babble; asked me, in Jacques' face, whether he were not my husband; made all sorts of good wishes for me; recounted all her misfortunes; told me, above all, of her rent, which she had to pay, and looked at me with the most pitiful air, as though to tell me that I ought to have brought her something better than soup. I have no money; my mother has but little, and never gives me any. I was sad, as I often am, that I can not relieve a hundredth part of the sorrows I see. Jacques looked as though he did not hear a word of all this. He had found, under a board, an old bible, gnawed by the rats, and he seemed to be reading it with great attention; but by-and-by, while Marguerite was still talking, I felt something heavy fall softly into the pocket of my apron; I put my hand into it and found a purse. I took no notice of this, but gave to the old woman the small sum she needed.

All was going on well; Jacques looked gentle and tranquil; but just as we were quitting the cottage it unluckily came into my head to tell Marguerite, in a low voice, that the gift was from Jacques. Thereupon she set to work to thank him; and truly, these benedictions of the poor are, it must be confessed, rather prolix and rather silly; but yet, it seems to me, we ought to accept them, because they have nothing else to offer in return. And what, now, think you, Jacques did? He frowned two or three times very impatiently, and then broke off the litany by saying to her, in a very harsh and imperious tone, "Very good, that's enough of it." The poor woman stopped, silenced and mortified. As for me, I felt a little out of humor with Jacques, and when we were a few steps from the hovel I reproached him for what he had done. He smiled; and instead of justifying himself, said to me, taking my hand, "Fernande, you are a good child, and I am an old man; you are right

in liking the effusions of gratitude which you inspire ; it is an innocent pleasure which induces you to persevere. For myself, I can no longer be amused with these things, and, on the contrary, they weary me intolerably."—"I am disposed," said I, "to believe that you are right in all you do, and am willing to think that it is I who am mistaken. But explain yourself; let me really understand you, Jacques, that I may never have an idea of blaming you, whatever happens." He smiled again, but rather sadly ; and so far from giving me the explanation which I sought, he merely repeated, "I told you, my dear child, that you were right, and that I love you just as you are." This was all. He spoke to me of something else, and, notwithstanding all my efforts, I was sad and troubled through the rest of the day.

Thus is it often. There are things in him which frighten me, because I can not account for them ; and he is wrong, it seems to me, in not being willing to take the trouble to make me understand him. But how many other things are there in him worthy of admiration and enthusiasm. I am wrong in allowing my thoughts to dwell on these little clouds, when I have so beautiful a sky to contemplate ! However, give me your opinion upon these mysteries ; I have great confidence in your good sense, and am in the habit of seeing a little through your eyes. This is not particularly pleasing to mamma. However, I shall soon be at liberty to write to you without concealment. Adieu, dear Clémence. I shall write you a second letter without waiting for your reply. I embrace you a thousand times.

Your friend,

FERNANDE DE THEURSAN.

II.

GENEVA ———.

IN sober earnest, Jacques, are you going to marry? How happy your wife will be! But you, my friend, will you be equally happy? It seems to me that you act precipitately, and I am alarmed at it. I know not how it is, but I can not get the idea of seeing you married into my poor head; I can not comprehend it. I am sad as death. It seems to me impossible that your destiny can be improved by any change; my conviction is, rather, that your heart will be broken by the shock of some new sorrows. O, my dear Jacques, how much prudence is needed by those who are situated as we two are! Have you thought over everything, Jacques? have you chosen wisely? You are observing and penetrating; but we are all deceived at times; sometimes the truth itself misleads us! Ah! how often have you been mistaken about yourself! how many times have I seen you discouraged! how many times have I heard you say, "This is the last effort!" Why am I beset by these dark presentiments? What can happen to you? You are a man, and you have strength.

But for you to think of marrying seems to me so extraordinary! You are so unsuited to society; you detest so cordially its claims, its customs, and its prejudices. The eternal laws of usage and of civilization you still hold in doubt, and you yield to them only because you are not absolutely sure that you ought to despise them; and with these ideas, with your indefinable peculiarities of character, and your indomitable spirit, you are about to make an act of surrender to society, and contract with her an indissoluble engagement; you are going to swear an eternal fidelity to a woman, you! you are going to bind yourself, your

honor, and your conscience, to play the part of protector and father of a family! Oh, Jacques! you may say what you will, this is unsuited to you; you are either above or below this part; whatever you may be, you are not fitted to live with men as they are.

You will renounce, then, all that you have hitherto been? all that you would still have been? for your life is a great abyss into which all the blessings and all the evils which man is permitted to experience, have fallen pell-mell. You have lived fifteen or twenty ordinary lives in a single year; you will still exhaust and absorb many entire existences before you know whether you have really commenced your own! Will you look upon this, also, as a state of transition, a tie which may be severed and give place to another? I am no more than yourself a believer in the social creed; I was born only to detest it; but who are the beings that can struggle against society, or even live without it? Is the woman whom you propose to marry like yourself? Is she one of those rare creatures who are born, five or six, perhaps, in a century, destined to love truth, and to die without having been able to make others love it? Is she one of those whom we used to call *savages* in the days of our vanished gayety? Jacques, beware! In the name of Heaven, remember how many times we have both flattered ourselves that we had found our mate, and how many times we have found ourselves left alone with each other! Adieu. At least take time for reflection. Think of your past; think of that of

SYLVIA.

III.

Bernande to Clémence.

TILLY, ———.

I HAVE this day made a discovery, my dear, which has left a singular impression upon me. In listening to the reading of our marriage-contract, I have learned that Jacques is thirty-five. Now certainly this is not a very advanced age, and, at any rate, one is never older than one appears; and at first sight I supposed him to be ten years younger. Nevertheless, I hardly know why, the sound of those syllables, *thirty-five years!* was terrible to me. I looked at Jacques with astonishment, and perhaps almost with displeasure, as though he had hitherto deceived me. Yet it is certain that he never spoke to me of his age, and that I never thought of asking him about it. I am sure that he would have told me immediately, for he seems to be very indifferent to all such things, and he did not even perceive the effect which the discovery of his thirty-five years produced upon me and upon several other persons present.

I, who even thought him rather old for me when I imagined him to be but thirty! I can not help it, Clémence, I may as well confess it that I am annoyed at this difference in our ages; it seems to me, now, that Jacques is much less my comrade and friend than he was before; he seems to me more like a father, and, in fact, he might have been my father, for he is eighteen years older than I! This alarms me a little, and perhaps modifies the kind of affection which I had for him. As nearly as I can express what takes place within me, I should say that my confidence and esteem increase, while my enthusiasm and my pride diminish; in fact, I am much less joyful this evening than I was this morning: this, indeed, I can not dissemble. Your letter is constantly re-

curring to me, and I think of the old, cold man whom you imagined him to be. And yet, Clémence, if you could see how handsome Jacques is, how elegant and youthful his appearance, how gentle and frank are his manners, how affectionate his glance, how fresh and melodious his voice, I would bet anything that you would be in love with him too ! I was struck and enchanted by all these things from the very first moment, and every day I have been still more touched by that manner, that glance, and the sound of that voice ; but it is very true that I have not, as yet, had the courage and the coolness to examine him closely. When we meet, I look at him with joy, and bid him good-morning, and at that instant he is seventeen, like myself ; but afterward I hardly dare fix my eyes again upon him, for his are always upon me. Whenever anything calls up a new expression into his features, I always feel that it is I who am being observed, and it does not seem possible for me to scrutinize him in turn. After all, where would be the use of my observing him ? what could I see in him that would not please me ? and what should I have the skill to guess if he took the least pains to render himself impenetrable to me ? I am so young, and he—he must be so experienced ! When he has observed me thus, and I have glanced timidly at him, as though to receive my doom, I see in his face so much affection, so much contentment, and a sort of silent approbation so delicate and so kind, that I am reassured, and feel happy. I see that all I do, all I say, all I think, pleases Jacques, and that, instead of a severe censor, I have found in him a being full of sympathy, an indulgent friend, perhaps a blind lover !

Ah ! hold : I am wrong in spoiling my happiness, and weakening my love, by these little questionings. Of what importance to me are a few years more or less ? Jacques is handsome, excellent, virtuous, esteemed and admired by all who know him, and he loves me ; I am very sure of that : what more can I ask ?

VOL. I.—2

I V.

Clemence to Fernande.

ABBAYE-AUX-BOIS, PARIS.

I RECEIVED both your letters together : two pleasures at once ! This would have been almost too agreeable, my dear Fernande, if it were not that these pleasures are troubled and somewhat alloyed by the uneasinesses which your situation causes me. You ask my advice upon the most important and the most delicate affair of life ; you would have me enlighten you with regard to things of which I am ignorant, persons with whom I am not acquainted, and facts which I have not witnessed : how can I reply to you ? All that I can do is to form, from the indices you give me, some uncertain and provisional judgment, which it will be for you to examine at your leisure, and to test by renewed observation, before you adopt it.

I do not know M. Jacques : I can not say, therefore, how far you may be able to reconcile yourself to the great disadvantages attendant on so wide a disparity of age ; but I can, in a general way, point out to you these disadvantages, and it is my duty to do so. It will be for you to reject my remarks if you are well assured that they do not apply to your own case.

It is commonly thought that men begin their social life later than women, and are younger in reason and experience at thirty than women at twenty : I believe this to be false. A man is obliged to seek a post of usefulness, or a position in society, on leaving college ; a young woman, on quitting the convent, finds her position awaiting her, whether her parents have already arranged a marriage for her, or whether they retain her for a few years with themselves. To be skilled in the use of the needle, busied with the petty cares

of the house, to cultivate superficially a few talents, to become a wife and mother, to accustom herself to nurse and wash her children, is to be what is called a complete woman ! Now, it seems to me, that, in spite of all this, a woman of twenty-five, if she have not seen something of the world since her marriage, is still a child. It really seems to me that all the insight into life which she gained while a young lady, dancing at a few balls under the eye of her parents, has, in fact, taught her nothing, except, perhaps, how to dress, to walk, to take a seat, and to make a courtesy. There is yet something else to be learned in life, and women learn it later, and at a heavy cost. To be graceful, to be skilled in the proprieties of society, and possessed of some sort of intelligence ; to have nursed her children well, and kept her house in order for a few years, does not always suffice to place her out of reach of dangers which may give the death-blow to happiness. But, on the contrary, how many things are learned by a man, in the exercise of that unlimited freedom which is accorded to him almost before he crosses the threshold of manhood ! how many rough experiences, how many severe lessons, how many ripening deceptions, will he have passed through and profited by in the course of his very first year ! how many men and how many women will he have already studied, at an age when a woman will have known no one but her father and her mother !

It is false, then, that a man of twenty-five is no older than a girl of fifteen, and that to form a well-assorted union there should be a difference of ten years between the husband and the wife. It is very true that the husband should be the protector and guide ; and since he is to be the master, it is desirable that this master should be prudent and enlightened. But at the same age, a man will have acquired quite enough of this sort of superiority over his wife ; if he have much more of it, he abuses his power : he becomes a scold, a pedant, or a despot. We will suppose M. Jacques to be incapable of any approach to this sort of character ; we will

give him credit for every good quality. I do not speak to you of love ; so far from it, I will even say to you that I do not consider love to be absolutely necessary in marriage, and that I doubt your really loving your betrothed ; for at your age one is apt to mistake the first affection one feels for love. I speak to you only of friendship, and I tell you that the happiness of a woman is lost if she can not consider her husband as her best friend. Are you quite sure that you can be the best friend of a man of thirty-five ? Do you know what friendship is ? Do you know how much sympathy is necessary to give it birth ? what affinities of tastes, characters, and opinions, are necessary to preserve it ? But what sympathy can exist between two beings who, from the difference in their age, receive opposite impressions from the same objects ? when what attracts the one, repels the other ? when that which is most highly valued by the older, is wearisome to the younger ? when what is agreeable and pleasing to the wife, is dangerous or ridiculous in the eyes of the husband ? Have you pondered all this, poor Fernande ? Are you not blinded by that need of loving which so miserably torments young girls ? Are you not influenced also by a certain secret vanity which you have not confessed even to yourself ? You are poor, and a rich man seeks and weds you. He has mansions and estates ; he has a handsome figure, fine hair, and dresses well ; he appears to you to be a very charming person because everybody says so. Your mother, who is the most selfish, the falsest, and the most adroit, of all managing women, arranges everything in such a manner as that you can not escape. She has probably persuaded you that he is in love with you, after having persuaded him that you are in love with him ; while perhaps you have, neither of you, any love for each other. As for you, you are like those little girls at boarding-school, who happen to have a cousin, and of course fall in love with him, because he is the only man whom they have seen ! You are noble at heart, I know, and are no more interested in

the wealth of M. Jacques than if it were not in existence ; but you are a woman, and therefore by no means insensible to the glory of having achieved, by your beauty and loveliness, one of those miracles which society sees with surprise, because they are, indeed, very rare : a rich man marrying a poor girl.

But perhaps I am offending you. I beg you, my dear child, not to take to heart too seriously what I have said. These are considerations which I entreat you courageously to examine, and respecting which you should severely interrogate yourself ; but it is quite possible that your situation may have nothing in common with their purport. In that case, these will be merely a few sheets of paper, which I shall have wasted in an endeavor to serve you, and which will simply be of no use to you. There is one other thing which I wish to say to you, and which, with me, is not the result of reason, but of an instinctive repugnance ; I would not, therefore have you attach more importance to it than it may be worth. I do not like that a face should indicate a different age from the real one. This sort of contradiction fills me with all kinds of superstitious ideas ; and, however foolish or unjust they may be, it would be impossible for me to repose confidence in a person with regard to whose age my first impressions had erred ten years.

In a case wherein he had appeared to me to be younger than he really was, I should think that selfishness, a dryness of soul, or a cold indifference, had prevented him from feeling the inroad of human sorrows, or had made him skilful in avoiding those moral struggles which make men old. In case of a contrary impression, I should imagine that vice, dissipation, or at least a certain sort of false exaltation, had precipitated him into those irregularities and fatigues which mature many other qualities besides reason ; in a word, I could not see, without dismay and terror, so evident an infraction of the laws of nature : there is always, in an anomaly of this kind, some mystery into which it is well to ex-

amine. But what can one examine at your age, and when the hurry of such a change of state and position in *less than a month* has closed your eyes to all dangers ?

You say that M. Jacques is beloved and esteemed by all who know him ; it appears to me that those who are acquainted with him, and who can have spoken with you about him, must be very few in number. On turning again to those passages in your former letters in which you have spoken of him, I find the number reduced to two, M. Borel and his wife. Your mother knew him at ten years of age ; and as she seems to have been acquainted with his father, she has, doubtless, very precise information as to his inheritance. I do not believe that she has been anxious about anything else, or that she has even taken the pains to point out to you the great unsuitableness of being eighteen years younger than one's husband. She was well aware of the age of M. Jacques, but I can easily comprehend how carefully she would avoid speaking to any one upon the subject. Women who are no longer young, are generally careful, when they speak of the past, to efface the dates.

You reproach me for not liking your mother : I can do no otherwise, my dear Fernande ; but I rejoice that you are so entirely unlike her, and if anything could console me for the precipitation of your marriage, it would be that you will thus be the sooner separated from her : you can not fall into worse hands than those from which you are escaping ; of this you may be very sure. I am not anxious that what I say should conform to the holy laws of prejudice ; it appears to me that I conform to those of sound reason when I endeavor to enlighten you with regard to the character of a person who has so much influence over your life ; and reason is the only guide whom I consult, the only divinity whom I serve.

I would gladly believe that the penetration of M. Jacques is not a chimera. I am persuaded of the correctness of a judgment formed at first sight, when the person who judges

has acquired the power of collecting all his faculties of observation into a focus, and of bringing them to bear at once upon the impression first received. He has judged truly with regard to you and your mother ; but with regard to the latter, it is very possible that remembrances of his childhood may have contributed to the aversion he felt on meeting her again.

It seems to me that the adventure of old Marguerite need not have occasioned you so much trouble and consternation. M. Jacques acted like a sensible man in aiding your little charities ; and I can easily comprehend his annoyance at the endless thanksgiving of the beggar-woman. But even this slight incident should show you how you are destined to differ from M. Jacques both in sentiment and conduct, even when you both are in the right. I wish that he may always be wise enough to tolerate this difference, and allow you to experience emotions against which his own heart will be closed.

Adieu, my kind Fernande. You see that I have no prepossession against the person of your betrothed. Remember also that whenever you shall be unwilling to have me speak the truth, you must cease to ask it of me.

I live tranquil and happy in the retirement of my abbey. The nuns have quite given over teasing me. I receive visits from all whom I choose to see ; and since I have left off my widow's weeds, I have occasionally gone into company. My husband's connexions wish me well, and if they are not very amiable people, I have, on my side, acted wisely toward them. Reason ! my dear Fernande—reason ! With its aid one can shape one's life for oneself, and, if not brilliant, it may at least be calm and free !

Your friend,

CLEMENCE DE LUXEIL.

V.

Fernande to Clemence.

FRIENDSHIP is very good, but reason is very sad, my dear Clémence. Your letter gave me a hearty fit of spleen. I read it through several times, and each time it made me more melancholy. It has made me distrust my mother, Jacques, myself, and you. Yes, I confess that I am a little out of humor with you for having so roughly broken the spell of my happiness. You are right, nevertheless, and I feel that you are truly my friend. It is from you that I seek the counsel and support which I dare not ask from my mother. I still believe that you think too hardly of her; but I can not avoid seeing that her heart is very cold toward me, and that she seeks, in my marriage, only the advantages of fortune.

After all, this marriage will not enrich her. She intends to live in Tilly, and to let me leave for Dauphiny with my husband. She has thus no personal interest in this affair. She thinks that money is the highest good; and all her efforts tend, not to acquire it for herself, but to procure it for me. Can I consider it as a crime in her, that she endeavors to promote my happiness in her own way, and according to her own ideas? As for me, I have examined myself severely, and I assure you that I am not at all influenced by vanity. So afraid have I been of allowing myself to be blinded in this respect, that this morning, after having re-read your letter, I felt like quarrelling a little with Jacques, in order to test his love and mine. I waited until my mother had left us alone at the piano, as she always does after breakfast. Then I stopped singing, and said to him ab-

ruptly, "Do you know, Jacques, that I am quite young for you?"—"I have thought of that," he replied, with his usual tranquil countenance.—"Had you not thought of it before?"—"It would have been difficult," I answered; "I did not know your age."—"Indeed," cried he, becoming paler than common. I felt that I had pained him, and I at once repented of what I had said. He added, "I should have foreseen that your mother would not tell you of it; and yet I had charged her to call your attention to the difference in our ages. She told me that she had done so; she told me that you were glad to find in me a father as well as a lover."—"A father!" I replied; "no, Jacques, I did not say so!" Jacques smiled, and kissing my forehead, he exclaimed, "You are as frank as a little savage! I love you to distraction! you shall be my darling child! But if you fear that in becoming your father I may become your master, I will call you my child only in the depths of my heart. And yet," said he, a moment after, rising from his chair, "it is possible that I am too old for you. If you feel that I am, it must be so."—"No, Jacques, no!" I replied, eagerly, rising also. "Do not deceive yourself," he continued; "I am thirty-five years old, eighteen years older than you. Had you not perceived it? is it not written in my face?"—"No; the first time I saw you I supposed you to be only twenty-five, and since then I took you to be no more than thirty."—"You have never looked at me, then, Fernande; look well at me; I desire it. I will turn away my eyes, that I may not intimidate you." He drew me to him, and, in fact, turned away his eyes. I then examined him with attention, and discovered that under his eyelids, and at the corners of his mouth, there are a few almost imperceptible wrinkles, and on his temples two or three gray hairs mixed with a forest of black hair. This was all. "And is this all the difference between a man of thirty-five and one of thirty?" said I to myself, and laughed outright at his idea of making me examine him. "I will tell you the truth,"

said I to him ; " your face, just as it is, pleases me much better than my own ; but I fear lest this difference of age may be more clearly felt in your character." I then tried to set forth to him all the doubts contained in your letter, as though they had occurred to my own mind. He listened to me with much attention, and with a serenity of countenance that quite reassured me even before he spoke. When I had said all, he replied, " Fernande, two characters precisely alike are never met with ; age has nothing to do with this. At fifteen I was in some respects older than you are now ; in others I am younger now than you are. We shall differ widely about many things, no doubt ; but in this respect you will have less to suffer with me than with any other man. Do you not believe it ?" What could I say ? The moment he tells me anything I believe at once ; he seems so sure of all he says. Ah ! Clémence, it may be that he deceives me, or that he deceives himself ; but it is impossible that I should be deceived as to my love for him. No, it is not a boarding-school girl's craving for something to expend her sympathies upon ! I have seen other men before him, and no one has awakened in me any sympathy. Eugénie's house is always full of men, younger, gayer, more brilliant, perhaps even handsomer, than Jacques. I have never wished to be the wife of any of them. I do not yield blindly to the fascinations of a new position. Your letters have had a great effect upon me ; I comment upon them ; I learn them by heart. Every moment I oppose some passage from them to the promptings of my love, and I see that prudence is useless, that reason is powerless. I perceive the dangers into which this love may precipitate me ; but the fear of being unhappy with Jacques does not lessen my desire to pass my life with him.

You say that only two friends have spoken to me in praise of Jacques. I will relate a conversation which took place in Cerisy, at the Borels', a few days ago. Five or

six of M. Borel's companions in arms were there. Jacques looked rather more serious than is his wont, but his countenance and manner expressed the same tranquillity of soul. He took a cup of coffee, and walked a few times up and down the room without saying anything. "Well, Jacques, how are you?" Eugénie inquired of him. "Better," he answered, gently. "He has, then, been sick?" I asked, in amazement. I saw that the glances of all the gentlemen turned toward me, and that there was a sort of kindly, and yet a half-mocking smile on every face. I felt that I blushed; but that was of no consequence. I was uneasy about Jacques, and I repeated my question. "I have had some pain in my head," answered Jacques, thanking me with an affectionate glance; "but it is nothing at all, and is not worth any one's attention." They spoke of other things, and he went out. "I fear lest Jacques be really sick," said Eugénie, watching him as he went away. "But we must know whether he is not in need of assistance," said my mother, affecting great interest. "Oh! above all, he must be left undisturbed," said M. Borel, abruptly; "he can not endure that people should busy themselves about him when he suffers."—"Faith! he has enough to suffer," cried one of the gentlemen; "he has two or three handsome wounds in the breast that would have killed any but him."—"He rarely suffers from them," said Eugénie, "but I fear that he has suffered a good deal to-day."—"Who can ever tell if he suffers?" replied M. Borel.—"Is Jacques made of human flesh?"—"I rather think he is," said an old captain of dragoons; "but I think there is the soul of a devil in that body of his!"—"It is more like the soul of an angel," said Eugénie. "Ah! Madame Borel, you talk like the rest of them," resumed the old captain; "I don't know what it is that Jacques sings in the ears of the women, but they always speak of him as though he were a cherub. As for us, poor sinners, they forget our virtues, *civil and military*."—(This is a favorite pleasantry with the

captain.) "Oh, for myself," said Eugénie, "I profess a sort of religious veneration for our Jacques, and my husband enjoins the same upon all around him." They then addressed to me, indirectly, several little affectionate observations, prompted by the best intentions in the world, but which, nevertheless, were somewhat embarrassing. I took the arm of Mademoiselle Regnault, and we went out, as though to walk in the garden; but I confessed to her that I was dying to hear the rest of the conversation about Jacques; and she led me under an open window where we could hear all that was said in the parlor. I heard M. Borel's voice, and perceived that he was talking to one of the gentlemen who was but slightly acquainted with Jacques. "You have observed Jacques' pale face and abstracted look," said he; "but I know not whether you have remarked the little humming sound which he makes in his beard when he fills his pipe, or cuts his pencil for sketching? Well, when he suffers much, his only expression of pain or impatience is that little song. I have heard it from him on several occasions, when I had very little inclination to sing. At Smolensk, when they amputated two of my toes for me, and extracted a couple of balls that were neatly lodged between two of his ribs, I swore like a soul in purgatory, M. Jacques hummed his air." Here M. Borel began to imitate Jacques' little Lilla Burello, which he did to the life. The gentlemen laughed. As for me, the image which this recital had brought before my eyes, Jacques bleeding, singing under the surgeon's knife, threw me into a cold perspiration, and I saw, in this impression, an additional proof that I love him; for I was quite indifferent to the sufferings of M. Borel; and while Eugénie, no doubt, shuddered at the thought of them, it was absolutely all the same to me whether he had two or three toes, more or less, to his foot. "Do you remember," said another voice, "the arrival of Jacques in the regiment on the eve of * * *?"—"Ah! brave Jacques! he was sixteen years old," said another

speaker; "he looked like a pretty young girl. There were five or six young fellows of good family landed among us within an hour, carefully wrapped up by their mammas in furred surtouts, genteel, nicely combed, rosy, not over and above pleased at the prospect of having to find their sleeping-quarters in the open field. Jacques was among them, with his little face, pale already, his mustache just sprouting, and his little song between his teeth. One said, 'He is the most ridiculous of the lot; he sets up for a bravo, and he is already as white as a sheet.' Another said, 'M. Jacques is the Cesar of the squad; at the first discharge of the cannon he will sing in another key.' Lorrain . . . who remembers Lieutenant Lorrain, with his devilish big nose, his stupid jokes, and his album of caricatures, that he held on to as close as his sabre? A good draughtsman, by my faith, and the best marksman in the regiment. There was my animal, by the light of the bivouac fire, amusing himself with a bit of charcoal, sketching a caricature of Jacques and his little companions, armed with fans and parasols. He had written underneath, 'Rich men going to battle.' Jacques comes up behind him, leans over his shoulder and says, with that sweet and genteel way that he always had, 'That is very pretty!'—'You are satisfied with it?' asks Lorrain. 'Quite satisfied,' says Jacques. 'So am I,' returns Lorrain. Everybody was laughing. Jacques sat down without being disconcerted the least in the world, and asked me to lend him my pipe. 'Have you no pipe?'—'No, I never smoked in my life; I want to try it; how do you do it?'—'You light that end, and put it into your mouth, and then you draw your breath with all your might, so that the smoke comes out of the other end.' Jacques shook his head with an air of simplicity, and took the pipe. We were hoping to see him cough, or grow dizzy. Every one filled his pipe and handed it to him, one after the other, filling him bumpers of brandy that would have fuddled an ox. I don't know whether he conjured

them away, but not a wry face did he make, nor was there any sign of twitching in his throat. He drank and he smoked half the night, and kept as cool through it all as though his nurse had brought him up on brandy and tobacco-smoke. Captain Jean, yonder, who remembers what I have been recounting, came up and tapped me on the shoulder, and said, 'Do you see that humming-bird? Well, I tell you, Borel, he will be one of our best mustaches. I know him; he comes of a small race, of old boxwood, very dry, but more solid than a great iron club. His father is a brigand, but he can handle the sabre. This one has still more coolness; and if a bullet do not strike him off my list to-morrow, he will make twenty campaigns without complaining of corns.' Next day we all know how Jacques acquitted himself, and received his decorations on the field of battle."—"You imagine that he was vainglorious after this?" continued the captain of dragoons, "that he jumped about like children to whom such a piece of luck happens to come, or that he went off into a corner to feast his eyes upon his cross, and kiss it, like the rest of us? He seemed to be every whit as indifferent to this as he had been to Lorrain's caricature, to his first fire, and his first wound. He received all our congratulations in a frank and friendly way, but without testifying either astonishment or joy. I do not know what could make Jacques laugh or weep; and, indeed, I have often wondered whether he were not one of those apparitions which the Germans believe in."—"Then you have never seen Jacques in love?" asked M. Borel; "for then you would have seen him melt like snow in the sun; it is only the women who have any power over that head of his. I promise you they have made some pretty ravages in it! In Italy—" Here M. Borel broke off suddenly, and I perceived that some one, probably Eugénie, had signed to him to say no more on that subject. This made me very impatient, and excited in me a terrible curiosity and uneasiness.

"I should like to understand," continued Eugénie, after a moment's silence, "where he has found the time to learn all that he knows in literature, poetry, music, and painting." — "Who the devil knows anything about it?" replied the captain; "for my part, I believe he came into the world with all that in his head; one thing is very sure, and that is that I did not teach him!" — "From your remark," said my mother, "I think it is to be presumed that his education was finished when he entered the service. I knew him in his tenth year, and he was then extraordinarily advanced for his age. He had all the weight and self-possession of a man; he must have developed very rapidly." — "Captain Jean is not very far from the truth in saying that Jacques does not belong entirely to the human race," observed M. Borel. "An infusion of steel has been worked into him; body and soul, the secret of which is lost, no doubt; hence, up to twenty-five, he appeared to be older than in fact he was; and since that period he has seemed younger than he really is." — "I shall never forget," interposed another person, "how he acted in his first duel." — "Parbleu! it was with Lorrain," said Captain Jean, "and it was I who forced him to fight: I loved that boy with all my heart." — "How! you *forced* him?" exclaimed the person who was not acquainted with Jacques, and to whom nearly all these narratives seemed to be addressed. "I will tell you how it was," replied the captain: "Jacques had certainly shown to good advantage in the battle of * * *, but it is one thing to command the respect of the cannon, and another to have the esteem of one's comrades. At that time duelling was not very rife in the army, for the enemy gave us too much of other work to do; nevertheless, Lorrain never passed a day without picking some sort of a quarrel, great or small, with some newcomer. He was by no means so well to be depended upon on the field of battle, but in a private encounter he was such a capital shot that no one could affront him with impunity. I never liked the fellow, and I would have given my horse

to any one who would have put him out of my sight. I had missed him twice, and I had got hit for my pains—one time in this wrist, and the other time in that cheek. He could not endure our little Jacques, and he was furious to see how he had put the laughers on his side at * * *. He himself had earned nothing, won nothing—not so much as a scratch! He consoled himself by making caricatures, by means of which he turned Jacques into ridicule: for those devilish caricatures were so well done that, in looking at them, you had to laugh, whether you would or no. One evening he drew Jacques' cloak upon the back of a cur. This was too much: I went off to find Jacques, who was asleep on the grass. I said to him, 'Jacques, you must fight.'—'With whom?' said he, yawning and stretching his arms. 'With Lorrain.'—'Why?'—'Because he insults you.'—'How so?'—'Are you not offended at his caricatures?'—'Not at all.'—'But he makes fun of you.'—'What does that matter to me?'—'Here it is, Jacques: are you brave only in battle?'—'I don't know anything about it.' Thereupon I made use of a word which I will not repeat in the presence of these ladies. 'Speak lower, Jacques, and take care that you never say to any other person what you have just said to me!'—'Why not, Jean?' says he, gaping as though he were mortally sleepy. 'You are asleep, comrade!' cried I, shaking him with all my might. 'When you have broken all my bones,' said he, with his ordinary coolness, 'do you think that I shall be any more convinced? Why do you insist on my telling you whether I am brave in a duel? I have never fought. If you had asked me, on the eve of the battle, how I was going to behave, I should have told you the same thing. I made my first essay in the character of a soldier on that day; now, if I must make a second, I ask nothing better, but I know no more than yourself how I shall get myself out of it.' A queer customer was this little Jacques, with his little philosophical reasonings. I was as sure of him as of myself, in spite of all he said to make me doubt him.

'I esteem you,' said I to him, 'because you are no boaster, and I know you have mettle. The friendship which I have for you obliges me to tell you that you must fight.'—'I am very willing, but find some reason for my doing so without being a fool. I confess that to want to kill a man because he amuses himself in drawing my unworthy person in a witty and diverting manner, does not seem to me to be possible. I am not in the least angry with this Lorrain; on the contrary, he really amuses me very much, and I should be greatly distressed at killing a man who makes such droll caricatures!'—'You must try and give him a touch on the right arm, and hinder him from caricaturing anybody in future.' Jacques shrugged his shoulders, and went to sleep again. I was not quite satisfied with this: I waited until next morning, and said to Lorrain, 'Do you know that Jacques does not take the joke so well now? He has said that the first time you caricature him he will fight you.'—'Good!' cries Lorrain, 'I ask nothing better.' He then picked up a bit of charcoal, and, stepping up to a white wall close by, he makes you a gigantic Jacques, with name and decoration: nothing was wanting. I called our friends together, and said to them, 'What would you do in Jacques' place?'—'That is not doubtful,' they replied. I went to find Jacques: 'Jacques, the veterans have decided that you must fight.'—'I am very willing,' says Jacques, looking at his portrait; 'but, upon my faith, that is not worth the trouble. You all think, then, that I am insulted?'—'Insultissimus!' replies a wag. 'I am ready, then,' says Jacques; 'who will be my second?'—'I,' said I, 'and Borel.' At this moment Lorrain comes in to breakfast. Jacques goes straight to him, and says to him, as though he were offering him a pinch of snuff, 'Lorrain, it is said that you have insulted me: if such were in fact your intention, I demand an explanation.'—'That was my intention,' replies Lorrain, 'and I will give you an explanation in the course of an hour. I leave to you the choice of weapons.'—'With what weapons must I fight?' asks

Jacques, coming back to me to light his pipe at mine. 'With whatever you handle best.' — 'I know nothing of any,' says Jacques; 'I am a recruit: God did not cause me to be born a soldier.' — 'How now, you unlucky dog!' cried I; 'you know nothing of weapons, and you get entangled in a scrape with a devil like Lorrain?' — 'You told me to do it, and I have done it,' says Jacques. 'Well, you can use the sabre; fight with sabres.' — 'How does one use them?' — 'As one best can when one knows nothing about it!' — 'All right!' says Jacques; 'when Lorrain is ready, you will call me.' He lay down on a table and went to sleep. At the hour appointed, Lorrain appeared on the ground with a jeering air. He made all sorts of taunts, and affected to give Jacques every advantage. On comes Jacques, with a sabre larger than himself, his slender arms making it fly higher than your head, and falls on his man, striking right, striking left, right ahead, at random, but hitting quick, like a flail, not troubling himself to parry, but only to advance. When Lorrain sees this new plan of action, he steps back and asks what this means? 'It means,' replied I, 'that Jacques does not know how to draw the sabre, and that he does the best he can.' Thereupon Lorrain took fresh courage and advanced again, but he received directly such a good slash in his right shoulder, that he was quite satisfied, and asked for no more. After that affair he remained more than six months without fighting or sketching."

They spoke a good while longer of Jacques; and if I were not afraid of wearying you with my narrations, I should tell you with what heroic fortitude Jacques endured his horrible sufferings in the Russian campaign. This shall be for another time, if you will; to-day, my desire to speak to you of him has led me far enough; it is time that I released you from my scribbling, and went to bed. Adieu, my friend.

VI.

Jacques to Sylvia.

CHIST, near Tours.

WHEN my sufferings slumber, why do you waken them, imprudent Sylvia? I know that they can not be cured; are you afraid lest I should forget them? But what, then, do you fear? And what page of my life can seem strange to you when it bears the signature of Jacques? Are you astonished at seeing me in love? Is it my love, is it my marriage, which appals you? As for me, if I could be alarmed at anything, it would be at feeling myself so happy; but I have been equally happy more than once, and more than once I have been able to renounce my happiness. When the time comes for me to vanquish my emotions, I shall vanquish them. I love, from the very depths of my heart, a virgin, a child beautiful as truth, truthful as beauty, simple, confiding, weak, perhaps, but sincere and upright as yourself. Nevertheless, Fernande is not your equal; no one is in this world, Sylvia; and therefore I do not look for it. I shall not expect to find in this young girl the strength and the pride which make you so great; but I find in her those gentle affections, those tender cares, of which my heart feels the need. I thirst for repose, Sylvia; I have long been walking alone in a weary road; I need to lean upon a pure and peaceful spirit; yours can not belong exclusively to me; I must possess myself of this one, which has hitherto known no one but me.

Yes, Fernande is *a savage*. Could you see her long fair hair loosened and floating in disorder over her shoulders at every movement of her youthful petulance; could you see her large black eyes, always full of wonder, always ques-

tioning, and so ingenuous when love has softened their vivacity; could you hear the somewhat abrupt intonation of her pure, clear voice—you would recognise, in these unerring indications, a frank and loyal soul. Fernande is seventeen; she is small, fair, rather plump, but yet light and elegant. Her black eyes and lashes, beneath a wilderness of flaxen hair, give a peculiar character to her beauty. Her forehead is not very high, but it is clearly defined, and indicates a mind rather docile than vivacious, capable rather of memory than of observation. In fact, she arranges and makes a good use of what she knows, but discovers nothing for herself. I will not tell you, after the usual fashion of lovers, that her character and her mind are formed expressly to insure the happiness of my life. Such a phrase would savor too much of the style of a notary's clerk, and the approach of marriage has not yet reduced me to that degree of imbecility. The character of Fernande is what it is. I have studied it, I understand it, and I shall act toward her accordingly. When I was young, I believed in the existence of a being created only for me. I sought it among the most opposite natures; and when I despaired of finding it in one, I hastened hopefully to seek it in another.

Thus did I aggravate the evils that oppressed me, and often brought discouragement upon myself. Romantic love!—dream and torment of the richest years of life!

Do not mistake me, however, Sylvia: I am not a man who, wasted and seared by the fires of the passions, retires from their tumults to lead a citizen's life with a simple, lady-like, and well-disposed wife; I am a man whose heart is still fresh, who loves deeply a young girl, and who marries her for two reasons: first, because in no other way can she be mine; and, second, because this is the only method by which I can take her out of the hands of a heartless mother, and give her an honorable and independent life. You see that it is a marriage of love; I do not deny it. If this determination necessarily involved the evils which you fear,

all that is old in me, my mind and will, would have taken alarm, and I should have fled, rather than abandon myself to the impulses of my heart ; but these evils are imaginary, Sylvia, as I am going to prove to you.

I have not changed my opinion. I am by no means reconciled to society, and marriage I still regard as one of its most odious institutions. I have no doubt that it will be abolished when the human race shall have made some further progress toward justice and reason : a tie more humane, and not less sacred, will take its place, and will insure the well-being of the children who shall spring from the union of one man and one woman, without fettering the freedom of either. But at present men are too gross, and women too cowardly, to seek a nobler law than the law of iron which rules them ; beings destitute of conscience and virtue need heavy chains. The improvements of which some generous spirits dream, can not be realized in such an age as ours : those spirits seem to forget that they are a hundred years in advance of their contemporaries, and that before they change the law they must change mankind.

For those who share these visions, who feel themselves to be less brutal, less ferocious, than the society in which they are condemned to live and die, the only alternative is to fight hand to hand with this false society, or to withdraw entirely from it. I have taken the one course : I would now take the other. I have lived alone, contemning the activities of others, and washing my hands before God of the impurities of the human race ; now I would live a double life, and would give to a being like myself the repose and freedom that all have conspired to deny to me. Whatever of strength and independence I may have acquired in the course of a life of solitude and of hatred, I would make use of to benefit the object of my affection—a creature weak, oppressed, poor, and who will owe everything to me ; I would bestow upon her a happiness unknown to this world ; I would, in the name of the society I despise, insure to her

the blessings which society refuses to women. I would have my wife to be noble, proud, and sincere; I would preserve her such as nature has made her; I would that she should never feel the need nor the wish to lie. I have embraced this idea as one that gives an aim to my gloomy and sterile existence, and am persuaded that if I succeed, my life will not have been entirely in vain.

Do not smile, Sylvia; this will be no small thing: it may be, in the sight of God, greater than the conquests of Alexander, and I will devote to it all my courage, all my strength; I will sacrifice everything, should it be necessary—my fortune, my love, and what men call their honor: for I have not deceived myself as to the difficulties of my enterprise, and the obstacles which society will not fail to throw in my way. I well know how its prejudices, its jealousy, its threats, its hatred, will bar my steps, and freeze with terror her whom I would lead by the hand through this desert road; but I shall surmount all: I feel it, I know it! If my courage should fail, will you not be near, to say to me—“Jacques, remember what you have promised before God?”

VII.

Bernande to Clemente.

TILLY, near Tours.

You are jesting with me : you say that I am getting to be quite a grumbler, and that I send you gossip enough to fill a dozen vaudeville ; and yet you say that I did right to recount to you all these particulars : and I think so too, for I see that you are half reconciled to Jacques. This character, so coolly brave, pleases you ; no wonder, then, that it pleases me also. I have followed your advice, but I do not quite know what conclusion I should draw from the conversation which I have had with the Borels. I send it to you, at the risk of being again treated as a chatter-pie : you will tell me what you think of it.

I could not have wished a better opportunity than the one which presented itself. Mamma had gone to make a call on our neighbor, Madame de Bailleul, when Eugénie and her husband arrived. Jacques had gone to Tours, on business. "I am delighted to find myself alone with you," said I to them ; "I have several questions to ask of both of you. But first, are you really my friends ? am I indiscreet in counting upon you as fully as upon myself ?" Eugénie embraced me, and her husband held out his hand to me in a blunt, soldierly way, that my mother would have considered in very bad taste, but which inspired me with more confidence than all the compliments in the world. "You must talk to me about Jacques," said I to them ; "you have never spoken of him to me except in his praise : it is impossible that you have not also some little evil to tell me of him."—"What do you mean by that ?" exclaimed Eugénie. "My good friend," replied I, "I am about to

unite myself irrevocably and very precipitately with a man of whom I know but little: this would be an act of great folly, if you were not sureties for the noble character of this man. At the same time, I have no idea of drawing back, for he knows, and you all know, that I love him; but notwithstanding that, and even on that account, I am desirous to know him better, that I may be on my guard against any defects, great or small, which there may be in him. You once told me, at a time when none of us dreamed that he would ever become my husband, that he had many singularities; now I am extremely interested in knowing what these singularities are, in order that I may never inadvertently wound them, and that I may avoid all that could awaken them. As yet, I have seen only their shadow, and I often ask myself if it be possible that a man can be as perfect as Jacques seems to me to be. I would guard myself against blindness and enthusiasm: I entreat you, my friends, speak to me, enlighten me."—"This is confoundingly embarrassing," replied M. Borel, "and I know not what to say to you. You are so frank and so kind-hearted, mademoiselle, that if you were my own sister I could not have more esteem and friendship for you than I have. On the other hand, Jacques is my oldest, my best friend. He carried me upon his shoulders in Russia more than three leagues. Yes, mademoiselle, the slender Jacques carried the great animal you see before you, who, without him, would have perished with cold beside his horse; and he himself just missed dying in consequence of that light burden. Perhaps I have told you about that: I could tell you of so many other things—debts paid, duels accommodated, blows warded off, both in battle and in the wine-shop—services without end; and I—what have I done for him? Nothing at all! Have I the right now to speak of him as I would of another man?"—"To any one but me, no, certainly," I answered; "but to me I think that you owe it."—"I don't know, I don't know! I love you very much, my dear Made-

moiselle Fernande, but, you see, I love Jacques still better than you."—"I fully believe it; but it is not for my sake only, but for that of Jacques, that I question you."—"Fernande is right," said Eugénie: "she must be acquainted with her husband, in order to avoid causing him many little vexations and perhaps serious annoyances. She says that she loves Jacques, and that no slight reasons could shake her affection for him: we must believe what Fernande says; she never lies; for myself, I hold her word to be sacred. As, on the other hand, I know that it is impossible to bring any serious charge against Jacques, I can not see the least impropriety in telling her all that you know. For my own part, though I have often heard Jacques' singularities spoken of, I declare that I have never seen any of them; and that during the three months that he has been living with us I have seen nothing in him that could excite my surprise, except his gentleness, the evenness of his temper, and the calmness of his mind."—"There, now, you are doing what I would not be willing to do," interrupted her husband; "you are saying what is contrary to the truth. It is true that you lie without knowing it. All the women regard Jacques with prepossession—even my wife, who certainly is a sensible woman."—"Very well, I would be still more so," said I; "I would see him such as he really is! Speak, my dear colonel: is Jacques of a whimsical temper? is he capricious? is he hasty?"—"Hasty? no; or, if he be, I have never perceived it: he is as gentle as a lamb."—"But is he capricious?"—"I will answer you on one condition—which is, that you will permit me to relate our conversation to Jacques, word for word, this very evening." This demand embarrassed me a little. "How!" said I to myself, "shall Jacques know that I have suspected him of not being always quite in his senses? that I have questioned his friends concerning the little secrets of his temper, instead of asking him frankly about them, and carrying my inquiries to himself?"—"You do not care to have me do so?" said the

colonel ; " well, then, let us leave the subject : excuse me from replying to you ; I promise you upon my honor not to tell Jacques that you have interrogated me." — " I have perhaps been wrong in doing so," I answered ; " but since I have done it, I will submit to all the consequences : it seems to me it would be less loyal to hide what I have done, than to persist : speak, then ; I accept the conditions." The matter being thus decided, he spoke to me of Jacques nearly in these terms : " I know not how Jacques is with women, and so I can not see very clearly of what use what I am going to say will be to you. All the women whom I have seen have loved him to distraction, and I do not know that any of them ever had a single reproach to make against him. I, who love him with all my heart, am often out of humor with him : why ? I can hardly tell. I find him dry, proud, distrustful ; I am angry with him because at certain times he knows so well how to make himself beloved. There are others in which it seems as though he no longer knew you. ' But what, then, is the matter with you, Jacques ?' — ' Nothing.' — ' Are you in pain ?' — ' No.' — ' Is there anything that vexes you ?' — ' Bah !' — ' But at any rate, you are not in your usual mood ?' — ' Yes, indeed.' — ' Would you rather that I left you alone ?' — ' Yes.' — ' Well and good.' All this is nothing : we all have our bad moments ; but when we are sure of a friend, we ask of him all the services which we need. There is no danger of Jacques' ever asking a single one, were it only a glass of water *in articulo mortis*, and this not so much perhaps through pride as through distrust. He never tells the reason of his silence, but one can see at once what it is by the sort of advice which he gives one on such occasions. ' Don't do that,' says he ; ' put friendship to the proof as little as you can.' You will agree with me that, for a man whose friendship is capable of every sacrifice, there is a sort of foolish pride in denying the friendship of others. It is unjust, and that pride of his has often made me angry with him. This singularity leads to others.

When he has rendered a service, he can not endure that any one should thank him for it : and he will flee from, and avoid for a long time, and even withdraw himself entirely from, the person whom he has obliged ; it seems as though he took a dislike to the face of those who have received anything from him. There is in this an excess of delicacy, but there is also something more : there is in it the cruel conviction that all those whom he has benefited will become his enemies. He has other inexplicable manias. He does not like to be looked at in certain moments, and one never knows why. He is not willing to be questioned, or to let one do anything for him, when he suffers. The most annoying thing about him is, that he can not bear that any one should speak of war, or talk over one's campaigns ; he goes away as soon as one begins to grow boastful over the desert. He never gets drunk, even if he have swallowed brandy. He never loses his coolness ; this makes a sort of discord between him and the rest of us, and on that account he was always more esteemed than beloved in the regiment. Had it not been for the services which he rendered in a way that was always magnificent, he would have been detested as an uncompanionable fellow ; for soldiers do not like those who are silent at table, and seem to think about it longer than themselves."

"From what you tell me," said I to M. Borel, "I think I can see that he has some grief at the bottom of his heart, and that his temper is inclined to melancholy."—"The bottom of Jacques' heart is not easily seen," replied he ; "but his temper is no more melancholy than that of any other person. He has, like all of us, his good and his bad days. He lends himself willingly to gayety, but he is never off his guard. As long as one has still enough of one's wits about one to be satisfied with a reasonable merriment, there is in him a little air of tranquil enjoyment which is enough to make one die of laughing ; but when it comes to breaking the glasses, Jacques will have no more of it ; he disap-

pears like smoke from a pipe, and vanishes very quietly, without one's knowing whether he went out by the door or the window."—"That does not seem to me to be a great fault," I replied. "Nor to me," said Eugénie. "Nor to me neither," said Borel; "I am now quite orderly, and this racket no longer seems to me necessary. But I was formerly a wild chap, and I confess that at that time I considered it as a crime in Jacques that he was less so than myself. There were some among us who never forgave him for always keeping in his senses; and who used to say that one must mistrust the man whose teeth were never unlocked by wine. This is the most serious charge that can be brought against him; it is for you to judge whether you will correct him on that point."—"No, indeed," replied I, laughing.—"Is that all?"—"All, on my honor. Now that I see with what philosophy you take these things, I am delighted that I have told you; for I would lay you a wager that you had been imagining something much more terrible."—"I do not know," I replied, still laughing, "whether there can be a more terrible fault than that of drinking with prudence and moderation. Eugénie is very happy in not having that reproach to bring against you!"—"You are a wicked one," said he, pricking my hand with his coarse mustache; "you have no more questions to ask me just now?" The manner in which he had complained of Jacques had appeared to me so singular, that I could only laugh with them about it. But when they were gone I began to think over certain parts of the conversation, which had not sufficiently struck me at first, these words especially: "It seems as though he took a dislike to the faces of those who have received anything from him." I know not why it was, but I was so much alarmed at this idea, that I was almost inclined to write to Jacques and break with him; for in fact I am poor, and am about to receive a fortune from him. It may be that he marries me only for the sake of giving it to me; and when I shall be his debtor

to this point, the slightest mistake on my part will seem to him an act of ingratitude. He will, perhaps, imagine that I owe him more than any other woman owes to her husband, and perhaps he will be right. For the first time, I am seriously alarmed at my position. My pride suffers, and my love still more.

VIII.

Elbia to Jacques.

It may be that you deceive yourself, Jacques; it may be that love alone blinds and draws you on, and that the wish to make of this love something great and beautiful in your life, is a dream conceived at the moment in which you replied to me. I know you, enthusiast! as well as you can be known; for your soul is an abyss into the depths of which you yourself, perhaps, have never descended! It may be that, under the mask of strength, you are about to commit an act of the most egregious weakness. I know well that you will draw yourself out of it in some strangely heroic manner. But what is the use of making yourself suffer? Have you not already lived enough?

Alas! I am now saying the contrary of what I said to you at first. Then, I feared that you were about to bury the brilliance of your life, and now it seems to me that you are courting the most difficult and the most sorrowful trial that life can oppose to you, for the pleasure of exercising your strength, and coming off conqueror from a struggle more terrible than all others. I can not be persuaded that this is a thing at which I should rejoice; the most mournful presentiments cluster round this new phase of your life. Why is it that your pale countenance comes every night

and seats itself beside my bed, staying motionless, and looking at me silently until break of day? Why does your spectre wander with me in the woods when the moon is rising? My soul is accustomed to living alone; God so wills it. What has yours to do in my solitude? Do you come to warn me of some danger, or to announce to me the approach of some misfortune yet more terrible than all those which my courage has hitherto withstood? The other evening I was sitting at the foot of the mountain; the sky was veiled, and the wind was moaning in the trees. I heard distinctly, amid these tones of mournful harmony, the sound of your voice. It uttered three or four tones that floated in the air, weak, but so pure and so characteristic, that I went in among the bushes whence it seemed to issue, to assure myself that you were not there. These things have rarely misled me. Jacques, it must be that a tempest is hanging above our heads.

I see plainly that love is precipitating you into some new snare. The only true word in your letter is this: "I marry this young girl, because in no other way can she be mine." And when you no longer love her, Jacques, what will you do with her? For the day will come when you will be as weary of having loved her, as you now are eager to abandon yourself to your passion. Why should this love differ from others? Have you changed so much within one year, as to have become capable of that which is, of all things, the most antipathetic to your soul, obstinacy? For by what other name can we designate the love that withstands the wearing influences of intimacy? You are capable of comprehending, undertaking, and executing, many things which men look upon as impossible; but, in return, of other things which would be easy to the many, possible to most, God, in order to compensate his munificence toward you by some great infirmity, has made you absolutely incapable. To be unable to bear with the weaknesses of others is your weakness, the miserable and blighted side

of your grand character, wherein God chastises you for your privilege of exemption from common miseries.

And you are right, Jacques ; I have always told you so. You are very right in forgiving nothing to this human mud ; you are right in entirely withdrawing your heart, as soon as you see a spot upon the object of your love ! The being who forgives defiles himself ! I, poor woman, know well how the soul loses its greatness and its holiness, when it places a soiled idol on its shrine. Inevitably, at a later day, will it break the altar where it has bent in homage to a false god ; instead of the cold resignation which should accompany this act of justice, hatred and despair make the hand tremble that holds the balances ; vengeance is mingled with judgment ! Oh ! it were better to have been born without a heart than to have loved thus !

You, strong man, you cover mysteriously the faults of others beneath the mantle of your silence ; your generous hand raises the fallen, wipes the soil from his garment, and effaces the stain which his fall had made upon your path ; but you then love him no more ! The day when you begin to forgive you cease to love ! And I have seen you in those days ; O how much you suffer ! Are you going to expose yourself again to what you call *the blight of compassion* ?

It is in vain that she is amiable, in vain that she is sincere and good ; she is a woman ; she has been brought up by a woman ; she will be cowardly and deceitful—only a little so, perhaps ; that will be enough to disgust you. You will then want to flee from her ; and she will still love you, for she will not comprehend that she is unworthy of you, and that she has owed your love only to that necessity of loving which devours your soul, and to the veil which this necessity will have thrown over your eyes, until the day of her first fault. The unfortunate one ! I pity and I envy her. She will have some beautiful hours ; she will have a terrible one ! You have foreseen this, I see it plainly ; you have thought of the time when, while with-

drawing from her your affection, you will leave her independence. Of what value will this be to her if she loves you? Oh, Jacques! I have always shuddered when I have seen you getting in love; I have always foreseen what has afterward happened; I have always known beforehand that you would suddenly break your bonds, and that the object of your love would accuse you of coldness and of inconstancy, at the very time when the ardor and the strength of that love would make you suffer most deeply. But now, what terror must I not feel, when marriage is about to seal this bond upon your conscience and upon that of a woman; when the laws, creed, and custom, will forbid you both from seeking consolation in another love! The laws, creed, and custom, are words to you; they will be chains of iron to this woman, whatever her character may be. To withdraw from their yoke, she must submit to all the evil that society can wreak on one of its rebellious children. How will she come out of this struggle? Desolate like me, courageous like you, or broken like a reed? Poor woman! no doubt she loves you confidingly, hopefully; she knows not whither she is going, the blind child! she knows not upon what a rock she would lay her feeble head, and to what a colossus of austere uprightness she is about to enchain her tranquil and fragile innocence. Oh! how strange a vow is that which you are about to pronounce together! God will not listen to either of you; he will not register so monstrous a compact in the book of destiny! But of what use is my warning? I poison your joy, and yet can not uproot the terrible hope of happiness which is devouring you. I know what it is, and I am not offended at your resistance. I have loved, I have craved, I have hoped like you, and I have been awakened from my infatuation as you have been so many times, as you will be again.

IX.

Clemence to Germaine.

ANY one but myself would lose time and trouble in telling you that you live among a very vulgar set of people, where everything takes place in the most inconvenient manner. I can only pity you, for I am sure that good society is, of all classes, the most reasonable and the most enlightened; and that its usages, founded upon sentiments of propriety and delicacy, are the best possible guides toward the good and the useful. Your mother is aware of this; and, with all her faults, I must at least give her credit for extremely good sense, and an excellent style of living. This has not hindered her, however, in her willingness to sacrifice everything to her desire of seeing you married to a rich man, from allowing you to go into very improper company. Eugénie was always a very common sort of person, and the convent, where one generally acquires a better tone, has not improved her. That she should delight in the soldieresque gesticulations of her husband's friends, that her mansion should have become an alehouse, does not at all surprise me. But that your mother should have abandoned you to such friendships, is to me somewhat revolting.

But no matter! I must content myself as well as I can, for M. Jacques is fully established in the said society of the said *champ d'asile*, at least I presume so. I have no prejudices. I see all sorts of people; I pique myself on being impartial in politics; I accustom myself to put up with the differences with which society abounds, without being astonished at anything. I will speak to you, then, as I should

speak to any one in your position ; and I will depart from all system and all custom, in order to place myself at the same point of view with you. Thus, I will say to you that, in his rough common sense, M. Borel was perhaps not mistaken, and that you should reflect much upon these words : "*He is never off his guard, and wine never unlocks his teeth.*" If I should hear this said of M. de Vence, or the Marquis de Noisy, I should laugh at it as you did with regard to M. Jacques ; but in your place, and with regard to M. Jacques, I should not laugh at it. M. Jacques has lived among men who drink, who get drunk, who are boastful. Whatever may have been his earlier education, from the age of sixteen he was a soldier of Bonaparte ; this must have obliged him to be a man like M. Borel, or to be infinitely his superior ; mind that, Fernande. I am strongly inclined to consider him such, after what you have told me of him ; but what if we should both be mistaken ? If he were inferior to the brave boobies whom you like so much, and who, at least, possess frankness and loyalty ; if all this reserve, which you take, perhaps, for nobleness of manner, were only the prudence of a man who hides some vice ? I shall of course say to you what I fear. I imagine that M. Jacques may be one of those men of a certain age, who have a good deal of depravity, and a good deal of pride. Such men are all mystery ; but one does well not to try to raise the veil with which they cover themselves. I can not resolve to say anything further to you, especially as I may, perhaps, be entirely mistaken.

X.

Jacques to Sylvia.

WELL! yes, it is love, it is madness! it is whatever you choose to call it—a crime, perhaps! Perhaps I shall repent of it, when it is too late. Perhaps I shall have made two unhappy instead of one. But there is no longer time for reflection; the current draws me on, and plunges me over the brink. I love, I am beloved; I am incapable of thinking or of feeling anything else. You know not what it is to me to love! No; I have never told it to you; because in those moments I experience a selfish want to fold my heart back upon itself, and to hide my happiness as a secret. You are the only being in the world with whom it would have been possible for my soul freely to expand, and yet that has been possible to me only in rare instants. There are others in which God alone could be the confidant of my sorrow or of my joy. To-day I will endeavor to show you all my soul, and to take you down into the depths of that abyss which you say is unknown even to myself. Perhaps you will see that I am not the terrible wrestler that you imagine me; perhaps you will love me less, proud Sylvia, when you see that I am more a man than you think.

But why should it be weakness to give oneself up to the dictates of the heart? Oh! emptiness is the real weakness! It is when one can no more love, that one should weep over oneself, and blush at having allowed the sacred fire to die out. For myself, I exult to feel that it revives within me day by day. This morning I inhaled voluptuously the first breezes of spring; I saw the first flowers opening. The noonday sun was already warm, and float-

ing perfumes from violets and fresh mosses were diffused through the glades of the park of Cerisy. The birds were hovering around the earliest buds, and seemed to invite them to open. Everything spoke to me of love and hope. I had so lively a sense of these blessings of Heaven, that I longed to prostrate myself upon the springing grass, and thank God in the overflowing of my heart. I assure you that my first love did not know these pure joys and these divine ravishings; it was a desire more sharp than fever. Now I seem to be young, and to be penetrated by love in a soul virgin of passions. And during this time you see my spectre wandering dismayed around you, dreamer! Oh! never have I been so happy! never have I so deeply loved! Do not remind me that I have said as much each time that I have been in love. What of it? We really feel what we think we feel. And besides, I would believe in a gradation of strength in the successive affections of a soul which has resigned itself to its impulses as ingenuously as mine. I have never worked upon my imagination to kindle or reanimate in me a sentiment which was not yet in existence, or which had ceased to be. I have never imposed love upon myself as a duty, constancy as a part; when I have felt that love was extinguished, I have avowed it without shame and without remorse, and have obeyed the providence which attracted me elsewhere. It is true that experience has made me old; I have lived two or three centuries; but at least it has ripened without having withered me. I know the future; but for nothing in the world would I have the cold cowardice to sacrifice the present to it. Who, I! I who am so inured to suffering, should I fall back before it, should I not dispute with this griping destiny, the good which I can yet wrest from its grasp! Have I then been so happy? have I no longer anything to know, anything new to possess under the sun of this world? I feel well that I have not finished, that I am not yet surfeited; I feel that there yet are joys for my heart, because my

heart still has desires and wants. I would conquer these joys and taste them, must I pay for them even more dearly than for all those which God has made me expiate already.

If man's destiny, or if mine at least, is to be happy that he may suffer afterward, and to possess all that he may lose all, be it so! If my life be a combat, a continual revolt of hope against the impossible, I accept! I still feel within me the strength to combat, and to be happy one day, at the price of all the rest of my future days. I defy fate to frighten me before the combat: let it break me, if it be the stronger!

Tell me not that I risk the happiness of another with my own. In the first place, this being, in the situation whence I take her, would only be unfortunate in other hands than mine; and then, what she is destined to suffer with me, is little in comparison with the cost of what I am resigned to suffer with her. I know the torments which await me, and I know what are the sorrows of others by the price of my own. How would you wish me to have compassion for any one? Would you dream of establishing a comparison between me and the rest of men? In the fact of suffering am I not an exception? Any one but you would laugh at this assumption, and would take it for a silly pride; but you well know that I do not boast of it, and that I lament it in the bitterness of my heart. You know that I have often cursed Heaven for having refused to me the faculty which it accords so generously to all other men, oblivion! For what do not they console themselves, and for what have I ever been consoled? Sorrow grazes them: I know not what zephyrs breathe upon their wounds and dry them at once; why do mine bleed eternally? Why is it that the first sorrow of my life, instead of vanishing in the night of oblivion, is always before my eyes, terrible and living as the prolific blood of the hydra? For all mankind misfortune is a funereal hymn which passes, and whose notes melt away, little by little, in the distance: when the last takes its flight, the

ear preserves not their sound. Why do they echo for ever around me? Why this eternal death-chant which rises every hour in my soul, and forces me to weep continually for my losses? Why is my forehead bound with thorns that pierce it at every breath of wind that disports itself among the flowers with which others crown themselves?

Oh! I see clearly that others do not suffer the hundredth part of my pain. They bewail themselves a hundred times more loudly, because they really know not what sorrow is. Insolent sybarites! they complain of a crease in a rose-leaf: I see how they are healed, how they console themselves, how blindly they become the dupes of some new illusion. Stupid and cowardly race! they would not dare these illusions, if they knew, as I do, what they are worth! When they are overthrown by destiny, they confess that they have been deceived. "Ah!" say they, "if I had known that it was going to end thus!" And I—I know how all ends, and yet I begin a new love! You see that I am a hundred-fold more courageous, a hundred-fold more unfortunate, than others. Fernande will then suffer with me: you would have me trace beforehand the death-warrant of my happiness. Well! be satisfied, stoic soul, unpitying vigor! one of us will cease to love—she or I, what matters it? The one whose love is the last to be loosened will not be the most unhappy! Fernande will console herself: she is sincere and kind; but she is weak, poor child!—weak will be her sorrow.

In the midst of my love and of my joy, there is one thing which wounds me, and which makes me indignant with myself and with you also, Sylvia: with myself, because I did not think of asking you about it in my last letter; with you, because you maintain a disdainful silence, as though you fancied I could have become indifferent to your fate. If you had such an idea, Sylvia, I should be ready to set out this very hour, to go and beseech you, on my knees, to give me again your confidence and your esteem. Oh! tell me how it is with

your heart, unfortunate one ! Speak to me of yourself ! How ! for three weeks we have spoken only of me, and we have not exchanged a word concerning your new situation ! The last time you spoke with me, you seemed tolerably satisfied ; but I can not be absolutely at ease with regard to the solitude in which I left you. This is very hard at your age, Sylvia ; and with your strength ! The more energy one has for resisting sorrow, the more one has for feeling it ! Tell me, tell me whether you have taken the mastery ? It does not seem to me, from the way in which you regard your position, that you have found peace of mind. Speak to me of that heart which judges and dissects me so severely, and which has all my follies, all my audacity. At least do not forget, Sylvia, that there is between us a sentiment stronger than love, and that you have only to speak the word, to send me from one end of the world to the other !

XI.

Fernande to Clemente.

My dear, your letter pains me horribly. In the first place, I do not comprehend any of it. What do you mean by depravity ? Is it inconstancy — is it the want of change in love ? If it be, I am dreadfully alarmed. I give you the conversation which I have just had with the huge Captain Jean, of whom I have spoken to you : you will judge what is passing within me ! This morning we took a ride in the woods of Tilly ; we were five men and five women, all in tilburys. As it was necessary that there should be in each of these little carriages one man to drive and one woman, and as my mother did not think it proper that I should ride two leagues with Jacques in a tilbury in presence of eight

persons (although she leaves me alone with him four or five hours every day in our garden); as M. Jacques was not desirous, I am very sure, to 'squire my mother, and as M. Borel had assumed that office in his stead; as, in fine, I could not go properly with any but a married man, and as Captain Jean is the father of four great stout children—it was decided unanimously that I should have this pretty page. As long as I could not be with Jacques, I was as well pleased with him as with any other; he seemed to me an obliging and kind man. But he is the most gossiping and the silliest boor I know of, and he has thrown my mind into such a state of perplexity, that I am in despair at having taken this ride with him. It is true that this is really my own fault. When I found myself tête-à-tête with a man who has known Jacques these twenty years, and who asked nothing better than to talk of him, I could not resist the temptation, and so I set him upon the track. At first, in a tone half friendly, half bantering, he began by speaking to me of his character, and, by degrees, drawn on by my questions, and by the air of pleasantry which I affected, he recounted to me the adventures of his life. I do not know what impression this made upon me at the moment: at present I am a prey to a frightful agitation; it seems as though I must conclude, from this conversation, that Jacques is an enthusiast and inconstant; at least the captain told me so more than twenty times. "You ought to be proud," said he, "of having chained the falcon; he has chased a goodly number of little partridges like you! But he is tamed now, and sits quietly on his lady's wrist. Cut his wings, if you wish him to stay there."—"What does that mean?" asked I. "Is it then so difficult to keep the heart of M. Jacques?"—"Ah! there has been more than one who has boasted of doing it," he replied; "but she reckoned without her host, poor thing! prrrr—! when one fancied that the cage was safely shut, out flew the bird through the bars! But I see that this does not give you any uneasiness; and that you

have made it your business to cure him of this fancy for changing."—"Certainly," I replied, trying to hide my consternation under a forced laugh. "But you, captain, who are a model of fidelity, according to M. Borel, how comes it that you did not lecture M. Jacques a little?"—"Ah! what the devil would you have had me do?" replied he, assuming a knowing air; "an enthusiast, a madman! An infatuation for petticoats is a real disease with him. He is as tender and as eager with the ladies as he is cold and reserved with the men; but to whom am I saying this? You know it better than I, Mademoiselle Fernande!" and he began to laugh in a coarse way that was insupportable. "He has, then, committed a good many follies in the course of his life?" I asked. "Follies?" replied he; "follies worthy of Bedlam; and for what creatures! the most arrogant *sluts*" (I repeat his expression, because it seems necessary, in order to give you a just idea of the manner in which he treats Jacques' love-affairs), "the most impudent jades I ever encountered; these women who are as handsome as angels, and as wicked as demons, rapacious, ambitious, intriguing, despotic; these women of whom there are so many, and whom you so little resemble, Mademoiselle Fernande!"—"How could M. Jacques attach himself to such women?"—"He was their dupe: he took them for little angels, and wanted to cut the throats of all who were not of his opinion. Ah! if you could know what Jacques is when in love: but what do I say? who knows it better than you? It is true that he meets with no contradiction anywhere on your account. When he announces his marriage, everybody tells him that he marries a little angel; and the first time that I heard it spoken of, I exclaimed, 'Ah, parbleu! Jacques, it is quite time that you loved a woman worthy of you!' He squeezed my hand, and at the same time looked at me askance; for, if he is satisfied to hear you praised, he is none the less furious when one says anything against the she-devils whom he has loved. Do you know that I have

come near fighting him more than ten times because I wanted to prevent him from ruining himself, from retiring from the service, and marrying the greatest brazen-face in the world? I love Jacques as my own child; I have received from him services which I shall never forget; but if I ever paid back any of my debts to him, it was in preventing him from getting into that fine scrape."—"How did you prevent it? Tell me about that."—"It was the Marchioness Orseolo. Parbleu! it is a story known all over Milan. The handsomest woman in Italy, and the spirit of a demon! Jacques is at least never deceived about those things, and there is always some little vanity in his choice: there was, above all, in this case. All the army of Italy, my faith! was at the feet of Madame Orseolo, who gave herself airs of patriotism, a very rare thing among the Italian women, and who manifested the most profound contempt for the poor Frenchmen. This tempts my madman of a Jacques, and there he is, with his pale face and his great mournful eyes, walking round the beauty, and following her like her shadow, until at length he has vanquished this proud courage, and brought this savage virtue to submission. All went on swimmingly: Jacques was ready to throw his epaulettes to the nettles, and take this charming conquest to France, not without marrying her, as she desired, and complete the greatest piece of folly that was ever committed—when, luckily, I got possession of flagrant proofs of the rather too tender intimacy which existed between the lady and her confessor; and I hastened, as you may suppose, to make a present of them to Jacques, who did not so much as say, 'Thank you,' but who nevertheless quitted Milan a quarter of an hour after, and disappeared for six months. We found him again at the feet of a celebrated singer, who subjugated him no less completely, and who deceived him in the same way. For her he came near losing his reason. I should never get through if I recounted to you all Jacques' adventures. He is the most romantic fellow

with that expression of tranquillity which you see in him ; but so good, with all his extravagances, so generous, so brave ! You will be happy with him, Mademoiselle Fernande ! If you are not, count me for the most lying varlet upon earth, and come and pull my ears for me."

Perhaps you can now see what Jacques may be : tell me, my dear Clémence ; for, for myself, I know rather less about it than I did before. But I am as sad as death. This Jacques, who professes to love me so much, and who has already worn out his heart for such contemptible beings ; these headlong enthusiasms to which he is subject, and which drive him to sacrifice everything to the object of his insane passion, and to make vows of eternal fidelity, which, directly after, he breaks and detests ! And if he should treat me thus ! If, on the eve of my marriage, he should get out of conceit with me ! The next day, which would be worse yet ! Oh ! Clémence, Clémence, into what an abyss am I ready to fall ! Tell me what must be done. For several days I have hardly seen Jacques. He is busy preparing everything for this marriage, and he goes to Tours and to Amboise two or three times a week. And besides, the terror with which he inspires me begins to be so great, that I am afraid to have an explanation with him, lest I should allow myself to be reassured. That would be so easy to him, and I want so much to believe in him ! I feel so unhappy when I doubt !

XII.

Sylvia to Jacques.

Go, THEN, whither your destiny is drawing you! I like this letter better than the other. It is frank at least. What I most fear is, to see you fall again into the illusions of your youth. But if you boldly face the peril, if you see plainly where you set your feet, you will perhaps clear the abyss. Who knows what the courage of a man may conquer? You are weary of playing the game slowly, and you stake your whole future upon a last throw of the dice. If you lose, remember that there remains to you one friendly heart to aid you in supporting the rest of your life, or to bear you company if you wish to rid yourself of it.

You tell me to speak of myself, and reproach me with maintaining a disdainful silence. Do you know, Jacques, why I contemplate so seriously the new phase of love upon which your destiny is entering? Do you know why I fear? why I have warned you of danger? why my eye is sad as I see you going forth to meet it? You have not divined? It is because I also am lost upon this stormy sea. I also abandon myself to destiny, and I place all that remains to me of strength and hope upon the hazard of a die. Octave is here: I have seen him—I have forgiven him. I made a great mistake in not foreseeing that he would come. I had made all my arrangements with a view to enable me to forget his absence, not to oppose his return. He came: I was taken by surprise; joy was stronger than reason.

I speak of joy! and you also, you speak of it! But what a joy is ours! Sombre as the flame of a conflagration, sinister as the last sunbeam that pierces the clouds before the tempest! We joyous! What a mockery! Oh! what be-

ings are we, and why do we always wish to live a life like that of others ?

I know that love alone is anything ; I know that there is nothing else upon earth. I know that it would be cowardly to flee from it through fear of the sorrows which expiate it ; but truly, when one so clearly sees its path, and the results to which it leads, can one taste any joys in their purity ?

For me, that were impossible. There are moments when I escape from Octave's arms with hatred and with terror, for I read in the beaming of his brow the decree of my future despair. I know that his character is not congenial with mine ; I know that he is too young for me ; I know that he is good without being virtuous, affectionate, but incapable of passion ; I know that he can love strongly enough to fall into every error, but not deeply enough to do anything great. In fine, I do not *esteem* him, in the particular acception which you and I give to that word.

When I began to love him I cherished in him this weakness which now makes me suffer. I did not foresee that it would soon revolt me. I did, in fact, what you are no doubt doing at present : I counted too much on the generosity of my love. I imagined that, the more he stood in need of support and counsel, the dearer would he become to me through receiving everything from me ; that the happiest, the most noble love which a woman could feel for a man, must resemble the tenderness of a mother for her child. Alas ! I had so eagerly sought strength, and my attempts had been so deplorable ! When I thought to lean upon beings who were stronger than I, I have felt myself so harshly repulsed by an icy coldness ! I said to myself, "Strength among men is insensibility ; greatness is pride ; calmness is indifference." I turned from stoicism with aversion, after having vowed to it an insane worship. I said to myself that love and energy could dwell together only in hearts that were bruised and desolate like mine ; that tenderness and gentleness were the balm which I needed for my cure, and

that I should find them in the affection of this ingenuous soul. "What matters it," thought I, "whether he knows how to bear sorrow or no? With me this is a knowledge of which he will have no need. I will take upon myself all the burden of life. His sole business shall be to bless me, and to love me."

That was a dream like all the rest: I was not slow in suffering from this mistake, and in learning that if, in love, one character must be stronger than the other, it should not be the woman; or at least there should be something to compensate. Here there is nothing. It is I who have to be the man; this part wearies my heart to such a degree, that I myself become weak through disgust of this exercise of strength.

And yet there are some very beautiful things in the heart of this youth. What treasures of sensibility, what purity of conduct, what artless faith in the heart of others and in his own! I love him, because I know no better man. He who is apart from all other men, inspires me with, and feels for me, only friendship. Friendship is also a sort of love, immense and sublime in certain moments, but insufficient, because it takes note only of serious misfortunes, and acts only on great and rare occasions. With the life of every day so odious and so wearisome in solitude; with this continual succession of little fastidious sorrows that love alone can change into pleasures, friendship disdains to occupy itself. You are capable, as you tell me very truly, of throwing everything aside in order to come and withdraw me from some painful situation, and would go from one end of the earth to the other to do me a service; but you could not pass eight days quietly with me, without thinking of Fernande, who loves you, and expects you. And it ought to be so: for, on my part, the feeling is the same. I could sacrifice all my love to save you from a misfortune; I would not lose one particle of it to preserve you from vexation. It appears, then, that life should be divided into two parts —

intimacy with love, devotion with friendship. But it is in vain that I would persuade myself that I am content with this arrangement; it is in vain that I repeat to myself that God has treated me bountifully in giving me a lover such as Octave, a friend such as yourself: I find love to be very puerile, friendship very austere. I would have for Octave the veneration which I feel for you, without losing the sweet tenderness and the lively solicitude which I feel for him. Insensate dream! We must accept life as God has made it. It is difficult to do this, Jacques—it is very difficult!

XIII.

Fernande to Clemence.

Do not write to me; do not answer me. Do not talk to me any more about prudence; and do not try any more to put me on my guard against danger. It is done. I throw myself into it blindfold. I love; am I capable of seeing anything clearly? Let it be as God wills it. What matters it, after all, whether I am happy or not? Am I then so precious a being, as that we should all be so much occupied about me? And to what will all this forethought lead? It can not prevent one from incurring a risk; it only makes one cowardly in risking. Do not, then, discourage me any farther; do not speak to me any more of Jacques; but let me still speak of him to you.

Yesterday he came to me unexpectedly in the park. I was sitting on a bench; my head was resting on my hands, and I was weeping. He wished to know the cause of my grief, and he was angry because I refused to speak. But what anger! He took me in his arms, and pressed me with so much force that he hurt me; and yet I felt neither

fear nor resentment at his treating me so roughly. He shook my hand with an air of authority, saying to me, "Speak, then; I insist upon thy speaking; answer me directly, what is the matter?" And I, who detest the tone of command, felt a pleasure in hearing it from him. My heart danced for joy, as it did when he called me *thou* for the first time, when he made me cross a brook, saying, "Jump, then, thou timid one!" Oh! much more this time! And what I felt, Clemence, is really inexplicable. My whole heart lay before his, like a slave who throws himself at his master's feet, or like a child in its mother's bosom. These things can not deceive; I feel that I love him, because I ought to love him, because he deserves my love, because God would not permit me to feel this confidence, this irresistible attraction, for an evil man. Pressed by his questions, I told him of my conversation with Captain Jean, and of the insurmountable terror which it had left on my mind. "Ah! in fact," said he, "I was intending to speak with you about the fears to which you yield, and the questions which you have put to Borel and his wife. That embarrassed me somewhat. What can I tell you? That Borel's reproaches are unfounded, that the captain's stories are false? It is impossible for me to lie. It is true that I have very grave faults, and that I have committed many follies. But what has this to do with you, and with the future which awaits us? I can swear to you nothing, save that I am an honest man, and that I will never wrong you. Register those words, if words are necessary to reassure you, and leave me the first time I am false to this promise. But if you have imagined that you will never suffer from the peculiarities of my character, and that you will never have any reproach to make against it, you have reckoned on making in this world a voyage to El Dorado, and have dreamed of a destiny which is permitted to no one upon earth." Then he became suddenly silent, and remained thoughtful and sad; and I also. At last he made an effort over himself, and

said to me, " You see plainly, my poor child, that you suffer already. It is not the first time, and unhappily it will not be the last. Have you, then, never heard that life is a tissue of sorrows, a valley of tears?" The sad and bitter tone in which he pronounced these words caused me so much pain, that my tears began to flow again, in spite of myself. He pressed me in his arms, and began to weep also. Yes, Clémence, he wept; this man, so grave, and so accustomed, as he doubtless is, to the flowing of women's tears; he was melted by mine. Oh! how feeling and how generous is his heart! At this moment I felt it indeed to be so. It matters little that Jacques is thirty-five. Could he have been better, and more worthy of love at twenty-five?

When I saw him thus affected I threw my arms round his neck. " Do not weep, Jacques," said I; " I do not deserve these noble tears. I am a cowardly being, and without greatness of soul; I have not reposed implicitly in you, as I should have done. I have suspected you; I have wished to read the secrets of your past life. Forgive me, your grief is too severe a punishment."—" Let me weep," said he; " I bless you for having given me this hour of softening and of effusion; it is long since such an emotion has come to me. Do you not feel, Fernande, that the sweetest thing in the world is the sadness which a loved one shares, and that the tears which are mingled with the tears of another are a balm for sorrow? I would that I might often weep with you, and that you might never weep alone!"

Oh! it is done! They may say to me of Jacques just what they will, I will listen to none but him. Do not blame me, my friend, do not make me suffer uselessly. I abandon myself to my destiny, let it be whatever God pleases; provided that Jacques loves me, I am sure that I can bear all things.

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XIV.

Jacques to *Fernande*.

I WISHED to say many things to you the other evening ; I could not speak. Our tears mingled, our hearts understood each other. That suffices for two lovers ; but for two married persons it is, perhaps, not enough. It may be that your mind needs to be reassured and convinced. I demand a very great proof of confidence from your affection, O my child ! in praying you to accept my name, and to share my lot. I am astonished at the confidingness with which, knowing so little of me, you have hitherto trusted in me. It must be, either that your soul is very noble and very generous, or that you have perceived that you have nothing to fear from the old Jacques. I believe in both, in your confidence, and in your penetration. But I know that hitherto your heart has had to bear the whole cost of this security, that I have been mute and careless ; in fact, that it is time that I should aid you to esteem me a little.

I will not speak to you of love. It would be impossible for me to prove to you that mine would make you eternally happy. I know nothing about it, and I can only say that it is sincere and profound. It is of marriage that I would speak to you in this letter ; and love is a thing apart, a sentiment which, between us, will be entirely independent of the law and of the vow. What I have asked of you, what you have promised to me, is to live with me, to take me for your support, for your protector, for your best friend. Friendship alone is necessary to those who associate their destiny by a mutual promise. When this promise is a vow which one of the parties may abuse so as to make the other suffer, it is necessary that esteem should be very great on

both sides, and especially on the side of the party which human laws and social creeds have made dependent upon the other.

It is with regard to this consideration, Fernande, that I wish to enter into a formal explanation with you, so that, if you give your heart up blindly to love, you may know, at least, to whom you intrust the care of your independence and of your dignity.

You may well have this esteem and this friendship for me, Fernande; I deserve them; and I say so without pride and without pretension. I am old enough to know myself, and to know of what I am capable. It is impossible that I should ever wrong you so seriously as to lose them, or even to compromise them. I speak to you thus, because I esteem you, and because I believe in you. I know that you are just, that your soul is pure and your judgment sound. Thus it is equally impossible that you should accuse me without reason, or, at least, that you should not accept my justification when it shall bear the evidence of truth.

It is right, nevertheless, to foresee all possibilities. Love may be extinguished, friendship may become heavy and grievous, intimacy may be the torment of one of us, perhaps of both. It is for this reason that your esteem is necessary to me! In order to have the courage to intrust your liberty to my keeping, you must know that I will never attempt to control it. Are you quite sure of that? Poor child! you have probably never thought of it. Well! in order to reply to the terrors which may arise in your mind, and to aid you to banish them, I have a solemn vow to make to you; I entreat you to record it carefully, and to read this letter over whenever the suggestions of the world, or any appearances in my conduct, shall cause you to fear any tyranny on my part. Society is about to dictate to you the formula of a vow. You are about to swear to be faithful and submissive to me; that is to say, never to love any one but me, and to obey me in all things. One of these

vows is an absurdity, the other a baseness. You could not answer for your heart, even were I the greatest and the most perfect of men. You ought not to promise to obey me, because this would be degrading to us both. Thus, my child, you may pronounce with confidence the consecrated words, without which your mother and the world would forbid you to be mine. I also will repeat the words which the magistrate and the priest will dictate to me, since at this price only is it permitted to me to consecrate my life to you. But to this vow to protect you, which the law prescribes to me, and which I will religiously fulfil, I would join another, which men have not judged necessary to the sanctity of marriage, and without which you ought not to accept me as your husband. This vow is, to respect you, and it is at your feet that I would make it, in the presence of God, on the day when you shall have accepted me as your lover. But I this day pronounce it, and you may regard it as irrevocable. Yes, Fernande, I will respect you, because you are weak, because you are pure and holy, because you have a right to happiness, or at least to repose and to liberty. If I am not worthy always to fill your soul, I am able, at least, never to be your executioner nor your jailer. If I can not inspire in you an eternal love, I shall be able to inspire you with an affection which will outlive everything else in your heart, and which will make it impossible for you ever to have a surer, a more precious friend, than myself. Remember, Fernande, that when you shall find my heart too old to be your lover, you may invoke my gray hairs, and claim from me the tenderness of a father. If you fear the authority of an old man, I will endeavor to grow young again, to go back to your age, in order to understand you, and to inspire you with the confidence and the fearlessness which you should have for a brother. If I succeed not in performing either of these parts—if, notwithstanding my cares and my devotion, I am a burden to you—I will go away, I will leave you mistress of your ac-

tions, and you shall never hear a complaint issue from my lips. You see what it is in my power to promise to you; the rest does not depend upon me. Adieu, my angel! Reply to this letter; your mother leaves you entirely at liberty. My servant will go for your letter to-morrow morning. I shall be obliged to pass the day at Tours.

Your friend,

JACQUES.

X V.

Fernande to Jacques.

Yes, I have confidence in you : I believe in your honor ; I did not need your vows to know that I should never be degraded nor oppressed by you. I am a child, and very little care has been taken to form my mind ; but my heart is proud, and my simple reason has sufficed to enlighten me upon certain things. I have a horror of tyranny, and if, from my first sight of you, I had not divined your character to be such as it is, I should never have esteemed you, never have loved you. My mother has always told me that a husband is a master, and that the virtue of a woman is to obey. Thus I had quite resolved not to marry, unless I should meet with a prodigy. This was scarcely probable, and it was much more easy for me to believe that I should quietly arrive at that sort of independence which is insured to the elderly days of portionless old maids. Nevertheless I sometimes fancied that God would perhaps work a miracle in my favor, and send to me one of his angels in the guise of a man, to protect me through this life.

It was a romantic dream, of which I never dared to speak to my mother, but which I never had the strength to put away from me. When I sat at the window with my em-

broidery, and saw the sky so blue, the trees so green, all nature so beautiful, and I so young! oh! then it seemed to me impossible that I could be destined to captivity or to solitude. What could I do? I am seventeen: at my age one is not quite as wise as one might be, and you see how Providence took it into his head to treat me as a spoiled child. One fine morning you arrive, Jacques, before I have yet suffered from weariness—before the tears of despondency have spoiled my schoolgirl freshness—all in the midst of my beautiful dreams and foolish hopes. And behold, you have come to realize them all, before I have had time either to doubt or to fear! In truth, it is not long since I was still a reader of fairy-tales: they were always the same thing, but they were very charming! There was always some poor damsel, ill-treated, deserted, or captive, who, through the chinks of her prison, or from the top of a tree in the midst of a desert, saw, as in a dream, the handsomest prince in the world, who was passing by, escorted by all the riches and all the delights of the earth. Then the fairy heaped prodigies upon prodigies to deliver her favorite; and one fine morning Cinderella sees love and the world at her feet! It seems to me that this is my own history. I have been asleep in my cage, dreaming golden dreams, which you have come to change into realities, so quickly, that as yet I do not quite know whether I am sleeping or waking.

Moreover, I am a little afraid. Happiness has come to me so promptly and so magnificently, that I hardly dare believe in it. And yet I believe that you love me, and that you are the best of men. I know that your conduct will be such as you announce to me. I know, on my part, that I shall not be unworthy of it: and the vows which you make to me that you will never enslave me, I make to you also. I promise that I will never exercise over you the tyranny of prayers, of reproaches, and of convulsions, of which wives know so well how to make use. Although I have not your experience, I think I can answer for my pride.

It is not, then, the austerity of marriage which alarms me. You love me, and you offer me all that you possess : I accept, because I love you. If, at a future day, we cease to esteem each other, I am not uneasy about my fate. I am able to work, and can earn my livelihood, and I do not see in this prospect anything so terrible that it should frighten me from accepting the happiness which you offer me to-day : it is not misery, it is not the common misfortunes of society which trouble me ; it is the love you have for me, it is, above all, the love I feel for you. You will not speak of it, Jacques, and it is the only thing which occupies my thoughts, the only thing which interests me.

Perhaps it is not quite modest in me to speak to you of this, while you seem to wish to address me upon a very different sentiment. But you have accustomed me to say to you without evasion all that comes into my mind. You have often told me that there is nothing in the world more hypocritical, and less pure, than certain habits of reserve which women impose upon themselves in their conduct and in their speech. With you, then, I give free vent, without fear and without shame, to all the impulses of my heart.

If I married you for the reasons which decide the marriage of three quarters of the young people with whom I have been brought up, I should content myself with what you have promised me ; and, provided that I were assured of being rich and independent, I should hold your love and my own very cheap. But it is not so, Jacques. How could you imagine that I had any other fear than that of losing the love which you now have for me ? I well know that you would remain my friend, but think you that *that* would be sufficient to console me ? Ah ! hold : let us not speak of our marriage, let us speak as though we were destined only to be lovers. There is, as you have said, something much more solemn than the law and the vow : there is what passes within me ; the attachment which I feel for you ; the strength which this attachment gains from day to day ; the want

which I feel to isolate myself from everything else, to love nothing and to see nothing in the whole earth but you. This it is that makes me tremble, for I know that my love will be eternal, and you, you know nothing about yours. This uncertainty is terrible, after what has been told me of your enthusiastic temperament, and of the facility with which you pass from one passion to another. Oh ! Jacques, it would have cost you so little to have said to me two words which would have reassured me more than your whole letter, and which I should have believed implicitly. *I will love you for ever !* Why, at the moment of writing them, do you stop short, as though struck with the fear of committing a sacrilege ? You can answer for an eternal friendship ; you can promise a sublime devotion, an heroic disinterestedness, a generosity above all prejudices, capable of making every sacrifice, of bearing every sorrow : but, *as for the rest, it does not depend upon you.* These words are dreadful, Jacques : efface them ; I send you back your letter. I do not wish for those other vows, I have no need of them. They seem like a treaty, a capitulation, between us. When you press me to your heart, and say, " Oh ! my child, how I love you !" I am much more sure of my happiness.

XVI.

Jacques to Fernande.

TOURS, ———.

ANGEL of my life ! last sunbeam that shall shine upon my brow, soon to be whitened by the hand of Time ! do not drive me mad ; spare your old Jacques : he needs his reason and his strength. You know not, you know not, my poor child, what you promise, and what you ask. You do not remember that you are but seventeen, and that I am twice your age ; that you will be still a child when I am old ; that the future is full of terror for me if I abandon myself too wholly to the smiles of pleasure, to too unwise aspirations. And you think that it is the fear lest my love should change that prevents me from promising you the same love which you swear to me ? Do you know that I have never been the first to change, and that in the most ardent days of my youth, after my first disappointment, I remained five entire years without loving and without touching a single woman ? Is that passing easily from one passion to another ? Go to, those who pretend to have studied me, and to recount to you my life, know but little of either. Have they told you that, before renouncing an affection, I had been compelled to do so by contempt ? Do they know what a passion founded upon a real esteem would have been to me ? Do they even know what it cost me *not to forgive*, and how many times I was ready to debase myself to that point ? But who is there that knows me ? Who has ever comprehended me ? I have never related anything of my suffering or of my joys to those men who take it upon themselves to judge me, and who have nothing in common with me but calmness on the field of battle, and the stoicism of a soldier upon

duty. You must bring your inquiries to me, Fernande, to me only, for I know myself well, and have never promised in vain. Yes, I will love you for ever, if you wish it, if you can always desire it. Perhaps this will be possible between us, who knows? You are sure of yourself, dear angel! oh how sad is the smile which comes to my lips when I read your vows! how difficult is it to resist the hopes which you give to me, and to keep from unwisely abandoning myself to them! Age of the mind, it is hard to reconcile thee with the youth of the heart!

You see that by tormenting ourselves about the future, we get to doubt each other, and to tell each other so, which is the saddest and most cruel thing in the world. Why seek to raise the sacred veil of destiny? The firmest hearts do not always resist its inevitable shock. What promises, what vows can bind love? Faith and hope are its surest guarantee. Ah! let us beware of too often interrogating the mysterious book wherein the duration of our happiness has been written by the hand of God; let us gratefully accept the present, and let us know how to enjoy it without allowing it to be poisoned by the fear of to-morrow. If it be to last but one year, but one week; if I have to pay for one single day of your tenderness by a whole life of solitude and of regret, I will not complain; and my heart will cherish toward God and toward you an eternal gratitude. Launch boldly, then, on this uncertain sea of life, where foresight is of no avail, where strength itself serves only to enable us to perish bravely. There is no conquest for those who are unwilling to struggle; there is no pleasure for those whom fear disquiets. Come to my arms without fear and without false shame: be ever frank as childhood. O my virgin! O my saint! blush not to tell me of your love. Chastity is naked as Eve before her fall. The man who has lived, for twenty years, a soldier in the midst of degraded nations, of condemned morals, of customs trodden under foot; who has traversed prostrate Europe in the midst of a society of bru-

tal and vainglorious conquerors, without contracting a vice, without receiving a soil—he, perhaps, is worthy of you, at least for a few years. If, at a later period, age should dry up his heart; if egotism and fretful jealousy should take the place of his love and devotion, cease to love him: you will have the right to do so; for it will be no longer the Jacques whom you have known, and whom you have promised to love for ever.

If all this do not reassure you, if you require from me yet other vows, it is impossible for me to say anything more. I am honest, but I am not perfect: I am a man, and not an angel. I can not swear to you that my love will always suffice for the wants of your soul: it seems to me that it may, because I know it to be ardent and true; but neither you nor I can foresee what strength and what endurance there may be in your enthusiasm, which constitutes the only difference between a moral love and friendship. I can not tell you that in me this enthusiasm would survive any great disappointment; but paternal tenderness would not die with it from my heart.

Pity, solicitude, devotion, these I can swear to you; they are in man's own power: love is a flame more subtle and more holy; it is God who gives it, and who takes it away. Adieu: despise not the friendship of your old

JACQUES.

XVII.

Sylvia to Jacques

Now that you are on the eve of marrying, now that we are entering upon a new phase of this nameless sentiment which we have for each other, you must tell me the truth upon one of the most important points of my destiny. Hitherto it has been right that I should respect your silence, and I have done so; now I can do so no longer. You are my only support upon earth; it may be that I am going to lose you: ought I still to accept your protection and your gifts? When you were independent, it mattered little to me whether you were my guardian or my benefactor: now, you are about to have a wife, who is a stranger to me; your property will belong legitimately to her; I will not take the smallest portion of it, if I have not a sacred right to your solicitude. Moreover, this uncertainty is painful to me, and the obscurity in which our relations are involved to my own eyes, spreads strange and terrible doubts over my life. Octave himself is uneasy about it; he has not sufficient greatness of soul to trust implicitly to my word, and not enough energy of will to accuse me frankly. The insolent comments of the inquisitive of this city amount to this: that you have been my lover, and that you allow me an independent maintenance through delicacy. I despise these inevitable inconveniences of my isolation and of my birth. Early accustomed to have no family, and to make my way painfully through a cold and scornful world that says to me at every step, "Who are you? whence come you? to whom do you belong?" I have never counted upon what is called *consideration*. I might perhaps have acquired it by making myself known, by seeking friends; but I have not felt the

need of doing so : your friendship sufficed for me, and filled my life, before it was occupied by love.

Now perhaps you are going to fail me : your new affections may separate us : I must try to attach myself more intimately to Octave. I must pardon him for having doubted me, which I would not have pardoned with regard to any other circumstance of my life, and must condescend to reassure him, by giving him a proof of my innocence. This proof, I am almost sure that a word from you can furnish : it is in vain that you have refused it—I have long since divined what we are to each other. Trace, then, this word, that it may place between us a sacred line that suspicion shall not dare to pass, that it may authorize me to sleep tranquilly beneath the roof of a house which belongs to you. Avow that I am not the child of one of your friends ; avow that you are my brother. You have taken an oath at the death-bed of him who gave me the light of day : you must break it ; it concerns the repose of my whole life. Of what importance is it to me to know the name of my father ? I have never known him, I can not love him ; but I forgive him for having forsaken me. Whoever he may be, I will never curse him : I will bless him, perhaps, if he be your father.

XVIII.

Jacques to Sylvania.

I HAVE reflected much upon your demand. When I took an oath at the death-bed of your father, I reserved to myself the right of breaking it at some future day, if certain circumstances rendered it necessary to your happiness and to your honor. I believe, in fact, that this moment has come; but really, what I have to tell you is so little satisfactory, so uncertain, that it would perhaps be better for me to remain silent, and to continue your adopted brother. However, if you refuse my support, I must speak, I must satisfy your pride, and tell you that you do not owe my devotion to compassion, but to a sentiment of duty, to a tie of consanguinity which my heart has accepted and legitimated from the day when it first knew you. I have the intimate conviction that you are my sister: I have not the certainty of it; I shall never be able to furnish a proof of it; but you can say to the whole universe that I have never had for you any other sentiments than those of a brother.

That little image of Saint Jean Népomucène, of which you have one half and I the other, is the only social proof of our fraternity. But it is august and holy in my eyes, and my soul clings to it with transport. When my father died, I was twenty years of age: I was his friend rather than his son. He was a good man, but weak; my character was quite different. He feared my judgment; but he had confidence in my tenderness. For several hours he had been a prey to the slow convulsions of the last agony; from time to time he revived, made an effort to speak, looked round with uneasy glances, pressed my hand convulsively, and fell back powerless. At the last moment, he succeeded in taking a

paper from under the bolster, and put it into my hand, saying, "You will do what you choose, what you shall judge that you ought to do: I leave it all to you. Swear to keep my secret."—"I swear to keep it," I replied, after having glanced at the paper, "until the day when my silence shall compromise the destiny of the being whom this secret concerns. Be assured that I will care for the honor of my father." He made a sign of assent, and repeated, "I leave it all to you." These were his last words.

The paper contained three separate parcels: on one was written—"On the 15th of May, 17—, was left, at the foundling-hospital in Genoa, a child of the female sex, with the sign of Saint Jean Népomucène." On the second—"I committed this crime, and this is my excuse: Madame de ——— had another lover at the same time with myself. Uncertainty, compassion, decided me to assist her in her sufferings. She was alone. The other had abandoned her, but I could not make up my mind to take charge of her child. With one accord, we left it at the hospital. That sufficed to complete the hatred and contempt that I felt for this woman. I kept the sign, in order that if, at some future day, it should be proved to me that the child was mine. . . . But this is impossible: I shall never know it." The name of this woman is written in full by my father's hand, and I know her. She is living; she passes for virtuous; at least she pretends to be such! I shall never mention her name to you, Sylvia; it would be of no use, and honor forbids it. The third paper was the shred of the saint, the other half of which had been hung about your neck.

I was almost as uncertain as my father could have been. He had often spoken to me of this Madame de ———. She had blighted his life; I had seen her in my childhood; I detested her. To go to the succor of her daughter, of the fruit of a double love, infamous and false, was a hardihood of generosity against which I felt at first an invincible repugnance. My father had desired me to do whatever I should think

best. I tried to bury this secret in oblivion, and to leave you to your fate, poor unfortunate one !

But there is a voice from Heaven which speaks upon earth to all men of "*honest and good heart*," as the holy canticle so touchingly expresses it. From the moment in which I resolved to cast you off, it seemed to me that God at every hour called to me to go to your relief. I had several dreams in which I distinctly heard the voice of my dying father, who said to me, "It is thy sister ! it is thy sister !" Once, I remember, I saw a group of angels pass before me in my sleep. In their midst was a beautiful child without wings, who was pale and weeping. Her beauty, her grief, made so lively an impression upon me, that I wakened at the moment in which I was springing forward to embrace her. I fancied that your spirit had appeared to me on its way to the skies. "She is dead !" said I to myself, "but before returning to God, she wished to come to me and say, 'I was thy sister, and I weep because thou didst abandon me.' " One day I took out the image of the saint : this wretched little engraving, taken at random, and in haste, no doubt, from some prayer-book, at the moment in which you were abandoned, made a strange impression upon me. Therein was your whole inheritance, all the titles which you possessed to the tenderness and cares of a family. The whole human destiny, the whole future of a poor child was there ! This was the only gift which your parents had bestowed on you in bringing you into the world ; in this were summed up the protection and the generosity of a mother. She had laid this magnificent present on your bosom, and had said to you, "Live and prosper !"

I felt myself penetrated with a compassion so lively, that tears came into my eyes, and I began to sob, as though you had been my child, and had been torn from me to be thrown among the orphans. So strong was the emotion caused by this engraving, that even now I can not see it without being ready to weep. We have often looked at it together ;

and when you were still a child, you would kiss it with transport, whenever I let you put it beside the half which had hung from your neck. How eloquent and angelic a reproach to your odious mother did these kisses, poor girl, appear to me to be ! They had told you, in your earliest years, that this saint was your protector, your best friend ; that he would help you to find your parents ; and when I came to you, you thanked him, you redoubled your confidence and love for him, and I began to love him myself. If the saint be not dear to me, at least the image is so. Through looking at it with the eyes of the heart, I have discovered in this face an expression which, perhaps, is not really to be found in it. I have three quarters of it in my portion ; it is the head of a young man with short hair and commonplace features ; but he is bending in a gentle and melancholy attitude over a bible, which is supported by his hand. 'In this book,' I would say to myself, before I had seen you, and while I imagined that you were dead, 'the mournful guardian seems to read the brief and miserable destiny of the infant confided to his protection. He contemplates it with tenderness and compassion ; for no one besides himself, in all the earth, has taken pity on the orphan.' Drawn toward you by an indefinable sentiment, I would almost say by a supernatural attraction, I left Paris six months after my father's death, and went to Genoa. I made inquiries at the hospital. This research was far from being certain ; I had the date of the day when you were left, but not of the hour. Several children had been left there on the same day. From the testimony of the registers, three different directions were given to me. The sign of Saint Jean Népomucène was the only token which I could give, and this you might have lost long before. My first attempts were in vain ; the child who was pointed out to me had another sign ; it was crooked and hideous. I trembled lest it should be my sister. I set out at once for a little village situated among the mountains on the coast, where they directed

me to a family of peasants who had still with them one of the children left on the 15th of May, 17—. What bitter reflections did I make with regard to your fate, while on the way. How degraded, ill-treated, miserable you might have been in the hands of those rude, coarse people, who make a speculation of their charity to orphans, and who only take upon themselves the charge of rearing them, that they may by-and-by have them for servants, without paying them wages! I arrived at Saint —, that romantic hamlet where you passed your first ten years, and of which you have retained such an affectionate remembrance, and I found you in the bosom of that honest family which cherished you as the equal of its own members, and whose goats you tended on the slopes of the Maritime Alps. That day will never leave our memory; will it, dear Sylvia? How many times have we recounted to each other the impression caused by our first sight of one another! But have I told you with what emotion I made my first inquiries? I was still in great uncertainty. Your adopted parents had assured me that you had an image of a saint; but they could not read; and as your scrap of the portrait bore only the last letters of the name of Népomucène, they could not remember the name of the saint whom the village curate had named several times in examining the sign. The woman who had nursed you did her best to persuade me that you were not the child for whom I was seeking. The hope of recompense could not soften to her mind the idea of losing you; you were so much beloved! you had already been able to exercise such a power of affection over all who surrounded you! The almost superstitious manner in which this family spoke of you, seemed to me a testimony to the mysterious and sublime protection which God accords to the orphan, by bestowing on him, almost always, some attraction, or some virtue, which replaces the natural protection of his parents, and which forcibly attracts to him the devotion of those whom chance assigns to him for support.

According to the comments of these honest mountaineers, you must have belonged to some most illustrious family; for you had as much pride in your character as though royal blood flowed in your veins. Your intelligence and your sensibility were the admiration of the curate and of the village schoolmaster. You had learned to read and write in less time than others took to spell. I shall always remember the words of your foster-mother. "Proud as the sea," said she, in speaking of you, "and wilful as the storm, everybody must give way to her. Her foster-brothers obey her like idiots; they are so simple, my poor children, and she is so proud! With all that, caressing and kind as an angel, when she sees that she has given pain. She lay abed three days in a fever, from grief at having hurt little Nani once when she was angry. She pushed her, the child fell, and bled a little. When I saw that, I, too, was angry; I ran first to pick up the little one, and then I looked for the little demon of a girl to give her a sound drubbing; but I had not the courage to touch her, when I saw her come to me, quite pale, and throw herself on little Nani's neck, crying, 'I have killed her! I have killed her!' The child was not much hurt, and Sylvia was more sick than she." The curate, in his turn, came in, and assured me that your saint was indeed Jean Népomucène. My heart bounded for joy, for I had already begun to love you passionately. What they told me of your disposition resembled so much the recollections of my childhood, that I felt myself your brother more and more every instant. During this time, they were looking for you; you had taken the goats to the pasture; but the mountain was high, and I waited for you impatiently at the door of the cottage. The curate proposed to take me to meet you, and I accepted gladly. How many questions I addressed to him on the way! how many traits in your character I made him tell over! I did not dare to ask him if you were handsome; that seemed to me so puerile a question; and yet I was dying to know. I

was still something of a child myself, and the interest which I took in you was, like my age, romantic. Your name, strangely chosen for a keeper of goats, sounded agreeably to my ear. The curate informed me that you had called yourself Giovanni, but that an old French marchioness, who had lived in the neighborhood since the emigration, had taken you into her friendship from your earliest years, and had given you this fanciful name, which, notwithstanding the good man's advice and remonstrance, had replaced that of your patron saint. The good curate had no great liking for the marchioness. He thought that she perverted your judgment, and excited your imagination, by letting you read the stories of Perrault and Madame d'Aulnoy, which he described as dangerous books. "It is well," said he, "that this lady's small fortune has not allowed her to give to the child's adopted parents a sum large enough to engage them to confide her entirely to her care. They have preferred to make a shepherdess of her, and, in the uncertainty in which the poor little one's future was involved, they were right, as much for her as for themselves. Providence now sends her another destiny; we must hope that this is for the best, since he is the father of the orphan, and takes care of those whom men have forsaken. But I entreat you, sir," said he to me, "to watch over her education. You are very young to take charge of it yourself; but let this good soil receive good seed from a well-skilled hand. There is in it the germ of an uncommon virtue, if one knows how to develop it. Who can say whether negligence, or imprudent lessons, would not cause vice to spring up in its stead? She will be beautiful, although somewhat burned by our sun, and beauty is a fatal gift to women unprotected by religion."—"Did you say that she is beautiful?" I asked. "Parbleu! look at her," replied the curate, pointing to a child who was lying asleep on the grass.—"We should have waited a long time for her, at the rate at which she is coming to us."

Oh! how beautiful, indeed, were you in your sleep, my Sylvia, my beloved sister! What a robust, courageous, and proud child did you seem to me, stretched out thus upon the fragrant turf, between the sky and the Alpine peaks, exposed to the scorching rays of the sun, and to the sea-breezes, which passed fitfully over you, and dried the sweat from your broad forehead, shaded by the waves of your humid hair. What a pure shadow did your long lashes cast upon your cheeks, browned by the sun, but smoother than the velvet of the peach! There was something at once careless, and melancholy, in the smile that seemed to lurk round your half-opened mouth; something of sensibility, and of pride, thought I, the character that this mountain-woman so artlessly depicted to me! I stopped the arm of the curate, who was going to waken you. I wished to contemplate you longer, to seek scrupulously, in the form of your head, and in the lines of your face, for some vague likeness to my father or to myself. I know not whether it really exist, or whether I imagined it, I thought I could recognise our fraternity in this broad forehead, in this brown complexion, in this profusion of black hair, which fell in two long braids to your knees, perhaps, also, in certain curves of the features; but nothing of this is sufficiently decided to command belief among men. This fraternity exists much more strikingly in our souls, and in the resemblances of our characters.

The curate called to you; you half opened your eyes without seeing him, then you made a disdainful movement of the shoulder and elbow, and went to sleep again. He then loosened the scapulary from your neck, opened it, and placed the scrap of the engraving which it contained beside the portion which I had presented. We recognised them at once. You awakened at this moment; your first glance was as wild as that of a young chamois. You saw the scapulary in our hands; you sought for it round your neck, and, not finding it there, made a sudden spring to snatch it

from us. But the curate held up before your eyes the two united halves of the figure, and you at once comprehended what was going on; you bounded upon me like a kid, and grasping me round the neck with the vigor of a mountaineer, exclaimed, "Here is my father! my father is found!"

We had much trouble to persuade you that I was not your father; you insisted upon it that I would not own it. The curate tried to make you comprehend that it was impossible—that I was but ten years older than you. Then you demanded of me impetuously where were your father and mother, and desired me, in a tone almost of command, to take you to them. I told you that they were both dead, and you stamped on the ground with your naked foot, saying, "I was sure of it; now, I must stay here."—"No," said I, "I will take the place of your father. He was my best friend. He has given over to me his rights over you. Will you go with me?"—"Yes, yes," you eagerly answered, embracing me. "See what children are!" said the curate, sadly; "one loves them, one brings them up, one lives only for them; and when one hopes to enjoy their gratitude and their affection, they abandon one with joy, to follow the first stranger who passes by, and without even asking whither they are going."

You very well understood this reproach, for you replied to the curate, "Do you imagine that I am going to abandon you? Shall I never come back again to see you, and to take care of Mother Elizabeth's goats? But, do you see, I must travel, and visit all the countries in the world. Some day I shall come back in a ship, with a large store of money, which I shall give to my foster-brothers, and we will buy a great herd of goats, and build a fold on the mountain of the Coquilles." You always spoke thus, in a sort of language at once fairy-like and biblical, which you had learned in your readings.

I stayed several days in your village. I almost wished to leave you there, so happy did this life appear to me, so miserable and mocking seemed the advantages of the society into

which I was about to introduce you, beside this laborious, healthful, and tranquil existence. But on observing you, in taking long walks with you upon the mountain, sifting with questions your ardent and artless mind, scrupulously weighing your strange replies, sometimes sparkling with good sense and reason, sometimes foolish as the fantastic ideas of childhood, I became convinced that you were not made for this pastoral life, and that nothing could attach you to it. Since then, amid the sorrows of life, you have gently reproached me for having taken you out of this torpid state, in which you would have lived tranquil, to launch you on a world of sufferings and of deceptions. Alas! my poor child, the evil was done before I came, and I do not think it necessary to accuse even the fairy-tales which the marchioness had lent you. Your eager and penetrating intelligence was alone in fault, and the germ of despair was hidden within you, in the scarcely half-opened bud of hope. Your head was not short and heavy, like the heads of your foster-sisters, and you would never have been able to make cheese and spin wool as well as they. I made you and your foster-mother recount to me the first sensations of your life. I know how you tormented yourself to divine whose daughter you were, when you learned that Elizabeth was not your mother. You remained all day long beside the road which led to the sea, and when you saw a sail, you would say, "There is mamma coming to see me in a white dress." Your fairy lore added ideas of travels, of riches, and of generosity, to this continual revery upon your family. You thought only of becoming a queen, in order to heap presents on your adopted parents. These gilded dreams could never have inhabited your brain with impunity. They would not have vanished tranquilly, with the dawn of reason, to give place to the occupations of an entirely material life. The sentiment of a destiny different from that of those who surrounded you, had given them birth; your heart would have regretted them with bitterness, or you would have been lost

in seeking to realize them. You were an adorable child, with your frank, bold, and enterprising spirit, your affectionate candor, and your fantastic desires. But it was time that more elevated occupations and more correct ideas should come to regulate the impetuous spring of this young head; education had become indispensable to you, not to make you happy, for *that* your superior organization scarcely permitted, but at least to prevent you from descending from the elevated platform upon which God had placed your intelligence. You left Elizabeth, your foster-brothers, the curate, the old marchioness, all your friends, and even your goats, with a sort of passionate despair. You embraced them, alternately, shedding torrents of tears. Nevertheless, when they proposed to you to remain, you exclaimed, "It is impossible! it is impossible! I must travel!" You felt it, Sylvia, this life was not made for you. From the depths of the abyss of the unknown a mysterious voice rose incessantly toward you, and called you into this region of storms, through which it was your destiny to pass. You have become what you now are, without losing anything of your wild grace, and your rough frankness. You have seen our civilization, and you have remained a mountain child. Is it strange that you should have so little sympathy with this false and imbecile world, when you bring from the desert the keen uprightness, and the severe love of justice which God reveals to pure hearts and to healthy spirits; when your whole being, and even your physical vigor, differ from the beings who are around you? They come not up to your ankle, poor Sylvia, and you weary yourself by looking on the ground, without finding a heart worth the picking up. I believe, indeed, that Octave is not made for you, and yet, if there be in the world a sincere, kind, affectionate young man, it is he; but the very best among all others is not your equal, and you must suffer. What would you have me say to you? Love him as long as you can.

As to the secret of your birth, I conjure you to give him

no details; reply to his suspicions that I am your brother. Persons of rightly-constituted mind would imagine it to be so, without asking any explanation. Octave's disquiet displeases me, on your account. I am wrong, no doubt. He does not know you as I do. He suffers as nineteen twentieths of men would suffer, in his place; he is jealous, because he is in love. I say all this to myself; but I can not drive away a sort of indignation which makes my blood rise, at the idea of a doubt injurious to Sylvia. We are both thus easily excited for each other. Ah, my sister, we are too proud! our life will be an eternal combat. But what is to be done? I should live a hundred years before I could consent to confess myself capable of the basenesses of which the world accuses its children. I feel my heart revolt against the mere idea of the turpitudes which it finds presumable and natural; and when I see the smile on the lips of him who refuses to believe me pure, when, after having accused me of some rascality, he goes away, shaking my hand, and saying, "No matter, be it as it may, I am at your service," I am seized with the desire of insulting him, in order to put a frank hatred between us, instead of this unworthy and soiling friendship. And you, upright and holy creature, who alone, of all the world, comprehend the old Jacques, and compassionate the sufferings of his pride, be to him what you will, but let him believe, let him feel himself, eternally your brother.

XIX.

Bernande to Clémence.

SAINT-LEON, DAUPHINY, —.

PARDON me, my friend, for having passed a month without writing to you. This was very wrong on my part, and you are right in scolding me. Yes, it is very true that I overwhelmed you with my letters when I was in trouble, when I needed your advice and your consolation! And now that I am happy, I neglect you. Love is selfish, you say; it summons friendship to its aid only when it suffers. I, at least, have acted as though this were inevitable; I am quite ashamed of it, and I beg you to forgive me. The best thing that I can do, toward repairing my fault, is to answer all your questions, and thus to prove to you that I have in no respect withdrawn my confidence from you. But do not conclude, from my coming back to you, malicious one, that my honey-moon is ended. You will see that it is not so.

Do I love my husband now as much as the first day? Oh! certainly, Clémence; and I may even say that I love him much more. How could it be otherwise? Every day reveals to me some new quality, some new perfection, in Jacques. His kindness to me is inexhaustible, his tenderness, delicate as that of a gentle mother for her child. Thus every morning compels me to love him better than the eve. To this felicity of the heart, to these joys of a happy and satisfied love, are added for me a thousand lesser delights, which it would, perhaps, be puerile in me to mention, but which are very lively, because they have hitherto been absolutely unknown to me. I speak of the agreeableness of wealth, which have succeeded, in my case, to a

life of economy and privation. I did not suffer from this mediocrity; I was habituated to it; I had no desire to become rich. In marrying Jacques, I thought no more of his fortune, than as though it had not existed. Nevertheless, I do not think there is anything unworthy in my perceiving the advantages which it procures, and in knowing how to enjoy them. These daily pleasures, this luxury, these thousand little profusions by which I am surrounded, would be to me as bitter as they are precious, if I owed them to a debasing contract, or if I received them from a proud and unloved hand; but to receive them all from Jacques, is to enjoy them doubly! there is so much grace, I might even say, so much delicacy, in his gifts and in his forethought. It seems as though this man had been born only to take thought for the happiness of others, and that his only business in life is to love me.

You ask me whether this country-life pleases me, whether I shall not grow weary of it, whether solitude does not alarm me. Solitude while Jacques is with me! Ah! Clémence, I see plainly that you have never loved. My poor friend, how I pity you! you have not learned what is most beautiful in woman's life. If you had loved, you would not ask me whether I feel myself isolated, whether I wish for the pleasures and amusements of my age. My age is made for loving, Clémence, and it would be impossible for me to be pleased with anything foreign to my love. As to the amusements which I share with Jacques, I have even more of them than I wish for; and I would often prefer to stay alone with him, and walk quietly through the alleys of our beautiful gardens, than to mount on horseback and scour the woods at the head of an army of huntsmen and dogs. But Jacques is so much afraid of not procuring me enough diversion! Brave Jacques, what a lover! what a friend!

You wish for details respecting my house, the country, the employment of my days. I ask nothing better than to

describe them all to you, for this will be to tell you of all the happiness that I owe to my husband.

It was eleven o'clock at night when I arrived here. I was very much fatigued by the journey, the longest I have ever made in my life. Jacques was forced almost to carry me from the carriage to the portico. It was dark and very windy. I saw nothing but four or five great dogs that made a terrific uproar about the wheels of the carriage as we came into the courtyard, and came leaping upon Jacques with joyful barkings as soon as he alighted. I was quite terrified at seeing these great beasts dancing about me in such a style. "Don't be afraid of them," said Jacques, "and be kind to my poor dogs. Where is the man who would testify so much joy in again seeing his best friend, after an absence of a few months?" Immediately afterward I saw a procession of servants of all ages, who surrounded Jacques, with countenances that seemed at once affectionate and uneasy. I comprehended that my arrival caused a good deal of anxiety to these honest people, and that a dread of the changes which I might introduce into the arrangements of the house, somewhat impaired the pleasure which they felt at seeing their kind master. Jacques conducted me to my chamber, which is furnished very luxuriously, in the old style. Before going to bed, having a desire to look out at the gardens, I opened my window; but the darkness prevented my distinguishing anything besides thick masses of trees, and an immense valley beyond. The perfume of flowers floated up to me. You know how dearly I love flowers, and how many things flit through my head when I inhale the breath of a rose. This breeze, laden thus with delicious odors, caused in me I know not what thrillings of joy. It seemed to me that a voice whispered to me, "Thou wilt be happy here." I heard Jacques speaking behind me; I turned, and saw a tall young girl of sixteen or eighteen years of age, beautiful as an angel, and dressed after the fashion of the peasant-women of

Dauphiny, but with much elegance. "Hold," said Jacques to me, "here is your waiting-maid. She is a good child, who will do her utmost to serve you well. She is my god-daughter; her name is Rosette." This Rosette, whose countenance is so intelligent and so kindly, and who kissed my hand with a little caressing and respectful air, was to me another omen of good. Jacques left us together, and went away to pay the postillions. When he came back I was in bed. He asked my permission to have his coffee brought into my chamber. While Rosette poured it out for him, I went quietly to sleep. If I should live a hundred years, I could never forget that evening, in which, nevertheless, nothing happened that was not very commonplace and very natural; but what smiling fancies, what a sense of comfort, cradled this first sleep under Jacques' roof! I may well say that I slept confiding in my destiny. The very fatigue of the journey had in it something delightful. I felt overpowered; I had not strength to think of anything. My eyes were still open, but no longer sought to take note of what they saw, yet were met only by agreeable images. They wandered from the silken and silver-fringed curtains of my bed, to the ever-beautiful and serene countenance of my Jacques; and from the cup of Japanese porcelain from which he drank his fragrant coffee, to the tall, elegant figure of Rosette, whose shadow was thrown upon the rare tracery of the wainscotted walls. The rosy light of the lamp, the sound of the wind without, the gentle warmth of the apartment, the softness of my bed—all this was like a fairy-tale, or a child's dream. I soon began to doze, waking, from time to time, to feel myself cradled in happiness. Jacques would say to me, with his sweet and affectionate voice, "Sleep, my child, sleep soundly." At length I went to sleep, and did not awake until eight o'clock next morning. Jacques had already been up some time. Seated beside my bed, as he had been the evening before, he watched me as I slept, and really I did not know, at first,

whether a whole night, or a quarter of an hour, had passed since the last kiss which he had given me. "Ah! mon Dieu! what a good bed!" cried I; "I must get up directly, and see this fine country-seat, in which one sleeps so soundly. How is the weather, Jacques? Do your flowers smell as sweet this morning as they did last night?" He wrapped me in my little foot-coverlet of white and rose-colored satin, and carried me to the window. I uttered a cry of joy and admiration at sight of the sublime aspect of the view unrolled beneath my eyes. "Do you like this landscape?" asked Jacques.—"If you find it too wild, I will have some houses built; but for myself, I like desert scenes so well, that I have bought up five or six little places that were scattered here and there, in order to remove, from this point of view, the dwellings that seemed to me to impair its beauty. If you have not the same taste, nothing will be more easy for me than to scatter little houses and gardens all over this valley; I should have no trouble in peopling it with poor families, who would insure the prosperity of their own affairs and ours."—"No, no," said I, "you are rich enough to succor all the families whom you choose to help, without thwarting your tastes and mine. The wild and romantic aspect of this scenery charms me to distraction; these woods, so lofty and so gloomy, seem never to have bowed their free vegetation to the hand of culture; these immense meadows look like savannahs; this little stream, with its irregular course, is prettier than a large river. Ah! let us change nothing in the places which you love. How can I have any other tastes than yours? Do you think, then, that I have any eyes of my own?" He pressed me to his heart, exclaiming, "Oh! first days of love! Oh! delights of Heaven! may you never end!"

It took me more than eight days to see all the beauties of this house, and of the neighborhood. This estate belonged to Jacques' mother. It is here that he passed his earliest years, and it is his favorite abode. He has a pious

respect for the remembrances which this place awakens, and he thanks me tenderly, because I sympathize in his respect, and desire no change, either in the things or in the persons that surround him. Kind Jacques! what a stupid monster one would be to demand of him such sacrifices!

The morning after our arrival, he introduced me to all the old servitors of his mother, and to the younger ones who have been, for several years, attached to himself. He told me of the infirmities of some, and of the faults of others, entreating me to have a little patience with them, and to be as indulgent with them as it would be possible for me to be, without imposing any real vexations upon myself. "Be sure," said he, "that I will never allow the pleasure of keeping round me the faces which time and habit have attached to me, to outweigh the comfort of your domestic life. It will always be easy for me to remove them from your sight, if they trouble you, without abandoning them to misery, and without their having any right to curse you. But if your repose should not be troubled by their presence—if I can reconcile your satisfaction with theirs—I shall be all the happier. Do you desire my happiness, Fernande?" added he, with a gentle smile. I threw myself into his arms; I vowed to love all that he loved, to protect all that he protects. I entreated him to tell me all that I had to do, in order that I might never cause him the shadow of an annoyance.

If you would know how our days pass, I will tell you that, as far as I am concerned, I hardly know, but that Jacques has always something useful to do. The management of his property occupies, without absorbing him. He has been able to surround himself with honest men, and he supervises, without tormenting them. He pursues a system of strict equity, never blinded by the negligence of a romantic generosity; he says that he who lets himself be despoiled, can have neither merit nor pleasure in giving; and that he who has found an opportunity of stealing, and

has profited by it, is more to be pitied than if he had ruined himself. Jacques is great and liberal; his heart is full of justice, and he regards it as a duty to alleviate the misery of others, but his pride refuses to be the dupe of the impostures which the poor palm off for a livelihood, and he is hard and implacable with those who would speculate upon his sensibility. I am far from possessing a discernment equal to his, and I often find myself deceived. Jacques never concerns himself about that; he apparently betakes himself to his determination not to reprove, and even not to warn me. Sometimes I am rather mortified about it, and I experience a feeling almost of remorse, at having misemployed the precious gold that might have relieved so much real misfortune.

I busy myself with these things during those hours in which Jacques is occupied elsewhere. When we meet we have music, or we go out together. Jacques smokes, or sketches, whenever we sit down; as for me, I look at him, and I may say that this sort of ecstasy is the principal occupation of my day. I abandon myself, with delight, to this blissful indolence, and I almost dread the pleasures that can rouse me from it. It is so sweet to love, and to feel oneself beloved! the days are too short to draw from the heart its fulness of enthusiasm and of joy. Of what use would it be to cultivate the few talents I possess, or even to acquire new ones? Jacques has enough for us both, and I enjoy them as though they belonged to myself. When some beautiful view strikes me, it is much pleasanter to find it drawn in my album by the hand of Jacques than by my own. I have no longer any desire to form or to embellish my mind. Jacques amuses himself with my simplicity; and he, who knows everything, certainly teaches me more by talking with me, than I could learn from all the books in the world. In short, I am content with the arrangement of my life; so many blessings surround me, that it is impossible for me to desire anything better-ordered in my life. Jacques is an

angel; and do you take care how you tell me again, Clémence, that I am mistaken, or that he will change; for now I know him, and I will defend him.

Adieu, my kind friend, you ought to rejoice in my happiness, you have suffered so much uneasiness on my account; now be at ease about me, and congratulate me. Let me hear from you often, and be sure I will not again neglect you. Something must be forgiven to the intoxication of the first days.

P. S. I have received a letter from my mother; she is still at Tilly, and will not return to Paris before the beginning of winter. She asks me if I am contented with Jacques, and is alarmed at the solitude into which he has taken me. I have not replied to her, as I have done to you, that love fills this solitude, and makes it dear to me; she would have thought this very absurd. I have told her of the advantages which she esteems so highly—of the fine horses that Jacques has given me, and the great hunting-parties he makes for me—of the vast gardens in which I walk—of the rare and precious flowers which fill the conservatories—and of the gifts with which my husband loads me every day. With all this, she can no longer suppose that I am not happy.

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XX.

Jacques to Sylvia.

I ABANDON myself like a child to the first transports of affection, and do not wish to foresee the time when I shall feel its inconveniences and its sufferings; when it comes, shall I not have the strength to accept it? Is it necessary to spend the hours of repose which Heaven sends us, in preparing for labors that are yet to come? Whoever has loved once, knows all that life contains of sorrow and of joy. Is it not so, Sylvia?

What you ask of me is very foreign to my character, and to the habits of my life—to recount, one by one, all the emotions of my present life—to throw, every day, a glance of examination upon the state of my heart—to complain of the ill that I endure, and to boast of the good that happens to me. To watch over myself, to hold myself dear, to reveal myself thus, is what I have never dreamed of doing. Until now, my loves have been hidden, my joys silent; I have told you of my pleasures only when I had lost them, and my griefs only when I was cured of them. Indeed, I thought that even this was a great act of confidence and of effusion; for I felt that it would have been impossible with any other human creature, and no one has ever obtained from my mouth an avowal of the most eminent events of my moral life. This life has been so agitated, so terrible, that I should have feared to lose, in the recounting, the joys that came to me so seldom, or to draw upon myself the eye of destiny, from whom I hoped to hide, furtively, a few bright days.

However, I do not now feel the same repugnance to breaking the seal of this new book, in which my last love is

to be inscribed. It even seems to me, as it does to you, that this exact and detailed knowledge of all that shall pass within me, may be salutary to me, and may preserve me from those inexplicable wearinesses with which love is filled. It may be, that by studying the evil in its cause, I may prevent its development. It may be, that by observing with attention the secret alterations of our souls, I shall be able to keep little things from acquiring an exaggerated importance, as always happens in intimacy. I will try to exorcise destiny; if that be impossible, I will at least accept my defeat with the stoicism of a man who has passed his life in seeking truth, and in cultivating the love of justice in the depths of his heart.

But before commencing this journal, it is expedient that I tell you whence I set out, what is the state of my soul, and how I have arranged my present life. You know that I have brought Fernande to the interior of Dauphiny, to remove her at once from her mother, a wicked and dangerous woman, who hates me particularly, and who flattered me basely, so much did she desire to see me insure the fortune of her daughter, and who began to brave me as soon as she had nothing more to fear in this respect. Poor woman! if she knew how soon, with one word, I could make her turn pale! But I will never descend so far as to fight with the wicked. I knew that she did not lack a certain skill for troubling the mind of her daughter with regard to me, and for poisoning our happiness with a thousand little malicious tricks, of terrible importance. I therefore carried off my companion the very day of my marriage, by which means I escaped from all that is insolent and odious in the silly publicity of a wedding. I came here to enjoy my happiness mysteriously, far from the inquisitive glances of importunate fools. I thought it useless, at the least, to oppose the modesty of my wife to the effrontery of other women, and the insulting smile of men. We have had none but God for witness and for judge of what is most holy in love, of what society

has succeeded in making hideous or ridiculous. During a month, nothing has yet impaired our happiness; not the smallest grain of sand has fallen into the bosom of this smooth and limpid lake. Bending over its transparent waters, I contemplate with ecstasy the sky which is reflected in their bosom; attentive to the slightest perturbation which could threaten it, I am on my guard lest the grain of sand should draw an avalanche after it. And yet I would not torment myself too much—what can human prudence accomplish against the all-powerful hand of destiny? All that I can try and hope for, is, not to lose the treasure that God has intrusted to me. If it must be withdrawn from me, this, certainly, at least, will console me—that I have not deserved to lose it. And besides, just now, all the foresight, all the fears in the world, make me smile a little. What is the worst thing that can happen to an honest man? To be forced to die? And what is that, let me ask you? I do not see that the certainty of having to die some day or other, prevents any one from enjoying life. Why should the fear of future unhappiness injure my present happiness? It is not that the opportunity of making me suffer has not already presented itself, and certainly I should have made use of it in my youth, when, eager for an impossible felicity, I had the ambitious folly to demand skies without clouds, and love without troubles. This inconceivable need, which leads man to exercise his sensibility when it is quite fresh and superabundant, exists no longer in me. I have learned to content myself with what I disdained to submit to, vexations against which, in other days, I should have revolted. It is impossible for me not to feel the sting of daily annoyances; my heart is not yet petrified; on the contrary, I believe that it has never been so truly moved. Happily, reason has taught me to stifle the slight convulsion which the wound produces; not to give birth, by a word, by a complaint, by a gesture, to this embryo of suffering, which opens and dies so easily, but which is developed so fast, and which grows

so fearfully, when one leaves it to essay its strength and to burst its prison. May my soul serve as a shroud for all these painful dreams that still torment it! May I never betray myself by any exterior sign of suffering! Between lovers, sorrow is sympathetic, and the first who experiences it, and conceals it not, communicates it to the other, even without explaining it.

Adieu for to-day, my cherished sister; we are now almost neighbors. I shall certainly come and see you; and, whatever you may say about it, I do not give up the project of making you acquainted with Fernande, and of drawing you to us.

X X I.

Fernande to Clemente.

I know not what has ailed Jacques these two days. It seems to me that he is sad, and this makes me so sad myself, that I come to seek a little amusement and consolation in chatting with you. What can be the matter with Jacques? what sorrow can reach him at my side? It would be impossible, on my part, for me to be rejoiced or grieved by anything which did not relate to him; it is true that out of him my life would be reduced to so little! It is only during the last three months that I have really existed, and Jacques must have suffered horribly before attaining to his present age. Perhaps also he may have been more happy than he is with me; perhaps in my arms he regrets the past. Oh! this thought is frightful: I would banish it at once! But what can sadden him thus? and why does he not tell me? I have no secrets, and he, he certainly has many. So many extraordinary things must have happened in his life! Do you know, Clémence, that this idea often makes me tremble?

A woman does not know her husband when she marries him, and it is folly to think that she will know him by living with him ; there is behind them a great abyss which she can not fathom : the past, which is never effaced, and which may poison the whole future ! When I think that three months ago I did not even know what it is to love, and that for these twenty years, perhaps, Jacques has done nothing else ! All the tender and affectionate things that he says to me, he has said, perhaps, to other women : these passionate caresses ah ! what horrible images pass before my eyes ! I feel half crazy to day, in truth. I went to the window, just now, to try and dispel these agitations : I saw Jacques cross an alley and bury himself in the park ; his arms were crossed upon his breast, and his head bent forward as though he were absorbed in profound meditation. Mon Dieu ! I have never seen him thus. It is very true that his humor is grave, that the gentleness of his temper is somewhat akin to melancholy, that his manners are dreamy rather than playful ; but to-day there is something unusual in his countenance, I can not tell what : perhaps rather more paleness. He may have had some bad dream, and, as he knows that I am superstitious, he is unwilling to speak to me about it ; if this be all, he would have done better to relate it to me than to expose me to the uneasiness which I feel. Perhaps he is sick ?— Oh ! I would wager that that is it ! I have been told that he never likes to be observed in such moments : however, I once saw him sick, and I perceived the little humming sound of which I told you. I questioned him, and he replied that he was slightly in pain, and begged me not to mind him. Whether he suffered little or much on that day is a thing which I can not know ; I was so much afraid of annoying him, that I did not venture to look at him. The fact is, that he then seemed to be hardly in his usual temper, and that now the uneasiness, whether physical or moral, which he feels, is quite visible. Last night it seemed to me that he kissed me rather coldly ; I slept badly, and, having waked

in the middle of the night, I saw a light in his chamber. I trembled lest he might be indisposed ; but, fearing still more to disturb him, I got up very softly and went on tiptoe to look through the crack of his door : he was reading and smoking. I came back to bed, somewhat, reassured, but sorry to see that he was not sleeping. I am so careless, and so much of a child, that, notwithstanding my sadness, I fell asleep again directly. Poor Jacques ! he has his hours of wakefulness ; perhaps he suffers much ; he is doubtless often weary during these long, sad nights ! Why does he not call me ? I would certainly conquer my sleepiness with joy ; I would talk with him, or I would read to him to amuse him. Perhaps I ought to entreat him to let me sit up with him : I dare not. It is extraordinary, I have this morning discovered that I fear Jacques almost as much as I love him. I have never had the courage to ask him what was the matter with him. What the Borels have told me of his singular touches of pride, has not left my mind, in spite of all that should have made me forget it, or at least have persuaded me that Jacques would never have them with me. Perhaps I ought to vanquish this timidity, and conjure him to confide his sufferings to me ; for I am not one who would be annoyed by them, and I can not see that he has any need to fatigue himself with playing the stoic with me. Perhaps my silence leads him to think that I perceive nothing. Ah ! in that case, what an idea must he have of my gross stupidity ? I can not allow him to hold such an idea. I must go and find him directly, is it not so, Clémence ? Oh ! my friend ! why are you not here ? you have so much prudence, and so practised a judgment, you would advise me ; for want of the voice of reason and of friendship, I will listen to that of my heart, and abandon myself to its counsels. I will go and meet Jacques in the park, and entreat him, on my knees, if need be, to open his heart to me. I will come back and tell you what is the matter with him, and seal my letter.

Well ! my friend, I was foolish, and it is I who have had

a bad dream. Forgive my having troubled you with this childish terror. I went to find Jacques : he was lying asleep on the grass. I approached him so softly, that he did not perceive me, and I remained for a few moments bending over him and contemplating him. There was, no doubt, an expression of anxiety in my face ; for, scarcely awakened, he started, and threw his arms around me, exclaiming, " Why, what is the matter with you ? " Then I told him frankly all my uneasinesses and all my trouble. He embraced me, laughing, and assured me that I was absolutely mistaken. " It is very true," said he, " that I did not sleep much last night ; I was in some pain, and I read." — " And why did you not waken me ? " I asked. " Can people keep awake at your age ? " he replied. " Do you know, Jacques, that you really treat me quite as a little girl ? " — " Oh ! thank Heaven, I treat you just as you deserve ! " cried he, pressing me to his heart ; " it is because you are a child that I adore you." Thereupon he said to me so many delightfully kind things, that I began to weep for joy. You see now whether I had any need to torment myself ! but I do not regret having suffered a little : I feel only the more vividly the happiness which I allowed to be troubled, and which I clasp again in all its freshness. Oh ! Jacques is very right : there is nothing more precious and more sublime than the tears of love.

Adieu, my Clémence ; rejoice again with me : I am happier to-day than I have ever been.

XXII.

Jacques to Sylvia.

For some days we have been sad without knowing why. Sometimes it is I, sometimes it is she, sometimes both together; I do not fatigue myself with seeking the reason: this would be still worse. We love each other, and we have not the slightest wrong to complain of on either side. We have not wounded one another by any action, by any word; that one's mood should be more melancholy some days than others is so natural! A rainy sky, one more degree of cold in the atmosphere, suffice to darken one's ideas. My old body, riddled with wounds, is more than usually susceptible to suffering; Fernande's young head, active and restless, is quick to torment itself at the least change in my manner. Sometimes this lively solicitude vexes me a little: she pursues me, she oppresses me, she holds me under arrest, and forces me to observe and to constrain myself. How can I be offended at this? This sort of fatigue which she imposes upon me is sweet in comparison with the horrible isolation in which I lived when I became acquainted with Fernande, and in which I consumed many of the best years of my life in a senseless stoicism. If she were really to suffer through my sufferings, I should regret the time when they fell only on myself; but I hope that I shall be able to accustom her to see me somewhat sad and preoccupied without tormenting herself about me.

Fernande has all the adorable childishness of her age. How beautiful and touching is she when she comes with her fair hair in disorder, and her large black eyes full of big tears, and throws herself into my arms, telling me that she is unhappy because I have given her one kiss less than yes-

terday ! She knows not what sorrow is, she dreads it excessively ; and really she sometimes alarms me also. I fear that she will not have strength to support life. I am in some uncertainty as to what I should say to her in order to habituate her to courage. It seems to me a crime, or at least a cruel act of reason, to scatter the first drops of bitterness into this heart so full of illusions ; and yet the moment will come in which the real destiny of man must be revealed to her. How will she bear up under the first lightning-glance ? Would that I might long hide from her this mournful light !

I have just received a piece of news that has given me much pain. That friend, of whom I have spoken to you, is again in flight. The sacrifices which I made for him, so far from saving him, have plunged him again into disorder. Now his dishonor can no longer be masked : his name is sullied, his life is lost ; there, as wherever else I have passed, I have labored in vain. Behold, then, all the service that friendship can render, all that devotion can do ! No, men can do nothing for one another : one only guide, one only support is granted to them, and that is *themselves*. By some this is called conscience, by others virtue. I call it pride. This unfortunate man has not possessed it ; nothing remains for him but suicide. Calumny reaches and dishonors no one ; time or chance does justice to all ; but a base act is never wiped out : when a man gives to another the right to despise him, he signs his own death-warrant for this life. There is nothing left him but to have the courage to pass into another, recommending himself to God.

But he will not even have pride enough for this step ; I know him : his spirit is corrupted and debased by the love of pleasure. It is vanity only which will make him suffer ; but vanity gives courage to no one : it is a disguise which falls before the lightest breath, and which can not resist the air of solitude. This destiny, which, for a moment, I flattered myself that I had re-established by my reproaches and

my services, is then fallen yet lower than before. One more man whose life has failed ! and whom no one, except myself, will pity ! When I recall the happy times I have passed with him, while he was young, and when neither he nor any one else imagined that this handsome, smiling face, and this lively and joyous temper, could serve as an envelope to the soul of a coward, I realize once more how full of illusions is this life of ours ! He had a mother who cherished him, friends who trusted in him ; and now ! If I were not married, I would hasten to him ; I would try again to raise him. But that would be useless, and Fernande would suffer too much from my absence. Poor man ! I am grieved to death : and nevertheless I would hide this sadness which would so soon communicate itself to my poor child. No, I would not see that beautiful brow again overshadowed ; I would not cover with tears those fresh and velvet cheeks. Let her love, let her laugh, let her sleep ; may she be always tranquil, always happy ! As for me, I was made for suffering : it is my trade, and the rind has grown tough !

XXIII.

Fernande to Clemence.

I AM sad again, my friend, and I begin to believe that all is not joy in love : it has also many tears, and I do not shed them all in Jacques' bosom, for I see that I add to his sadness by showing mine. During the last month we have had several fits of sympathetic melancholy without any real cause ; but which, nevertheless, have had sorrowful effects. It is true that when they pass off we are happier than ever, and treasure each other with more enthusiasm ; but I always say to myself that it is the last time that I will torment Jacques with my childishnesses, and I know not how it happens that I always begin again. I can not see him sad without at once becoming so myself : it seems to me that this is a proof of love, and that he ought not to be vexed at it ; and indeed he is not vexed at it. He treats me always with so much sweetness and kindness—how would he manage to say to me a harsh or even a cold word ? But it grieves him, and he gently reproaches me : then I weep from remorse, tenderness, and gratitude, and I go to bed fatigued, heart-broken, promising to myself very earnestly that I will never begin again ; for, in truth, this does harm, and it is just so many days subtracted from my happiness. I certainly have very foolish fancies ; but I do not know how it is possible to love without having them. For example, I am continually tormenting myself with the fear of not being sufficiently beloved, and I dare not tell Jacques that this is the cause of all my agitation. I believe truly that he has days of physical suffering, but it is certain that his mind is not always at peace : the reading of certain things agitates him ; certain circumstances, indifferent in appearance, appear to bring

back painful remembrances to him. I should not be so much disquieted if he confided them to me ; but he is silent as the tomb, and treats me as a person entirely apart from himself. The other day I began to sing an old ballad which had fallen, I know not how, into my hands ; Jacques was lying on the large sofa in the saloon, and smoking a great Turkish pipe which he prizes very highly : I had sung only the first few bars when he struck upon the inlaid floor with his pipe, as though seized with some convulsive emotion, and broke it. "Ah ! my friend, what have you done ?" cried I ; "you have broken your beloved Alexandrian pipe !" — "It is possible," said he ; "I did not perceive it. Go on with your song." — "But I hardly dare to," I replied : "I must have sung some terribly false note just now, for you started like one beside himself." — "I was not aware of it," said he ; "go on, I beg of you." I can not tell how it happens that I am always alive to the impressions which Jacques tries to hide from me : there is a secret instinct which deceives or enlightens me, I do not know which, but which compels me to refer all that he does, and all that he says, to some cause inimical to my happiness. I imagined that he had heard this song sung by some mistress whose memory was still dear to him, and I felt all at once an absurd jealousy. I threw it aside, and began to sing another. Jacques listened to it without interrupting me, and then he asked me for the first, saying that he knew it, and that it pleased him very much. These words, which seemed to confirm my doubts, plunged a dagger into my heart. I thought it stupid and barbarous in Jacques thus to seek to awaken again, in the midst of our love, the remembrances of the former loves of his life ; and while I sang the ballad, the big tears fell upon my fingers. Jacques turned his back to me, and imagined, no doubt, that, because his attitude was perfectly still, I should not perceive his emotion ; but I paid a close attention to him, notwithstanding my grief, and I observed two or three sighs which seemed to come from an oppressed

soul, and to shake his whole body. When I had finished, there was a long silence between us : I wept, and a sob escaped me in spite of myself. Jacques was so much absorbed, that he did not perceive it, and went out, humming, in a melancholy tone, the refrain of the ballad.

I went into the wood to give vent to my unhappiness in freedom ; but, at the turn of a path, I found myself face to face with him. He questioned me upon my sadness with his usual gentleness, but much more coldly than at other times. This air of severity weighed upon me so much, that I would not confess to him why my eyes were red : I said that it was the wind—a headache—I told him a thousand stories which it was impossible to believe, but with which he pretended to be satisfied, for he insisted very little upon the matter, and tried to divert me. He did not find it very difficult : I am such a child that everything amuses me. He took me to see some goats from Cachemire, which had just been brought to him, with a keeper, whose stupidity made me die of laughing. But see how it is with me ! As soon as I found myself once more alone, my grief came back upon me, and I began to weep again, thinking over the occurrence of the morning. What gave me more pain than all the rest, was, the thought that I had been troublesome to Jacques. And besides, the indifference which he had shown, proved to me that he was no longer disposed to listen to my childish confessions, and to trouble himself with my griefs. Perhaps he had this idea ; perhaps he felt a little remorse for having made me sing that song ; perhaps we both understood each other without explaining ourselves. The fact is, that in the evening he asked me with an air of indifference whether I knew by heart the song I had sung in the morning. “ You like that song very much ! ” said I with a little bitterness. “ Very much,” he replied, “ especially from your lips : you sung it this morning with an expression which moved me to the bottom of my heart.” Prompted by I know not what desire to give myself pain for the sake of

humoring his fancy, I offered to sing it again ; and I was about to light a taper for that purpose, when he stopped me, saying that it should be at some other time, and that he preferred to walk with me by the moonlight. The next morning I looked for the song, and could not find it on the piano. I looked for it every day afterward without success. Pressed by curiosity, I ventured to ask Jacques whether he had not seen it ? " I tore it up accidentally," replied he ; " do not think any more of it." It seemed to me that he said these words, "*do not think any more of it,*" in a peculiar way, and that it expressed a good many things. I may be mistaken, but I shall never believe that he tore up that song accidentally. He wished to know beforehand whether I could sing it by heart ; and, when he was sure that I could not, he destroyed it. It is evident, then, that it caused him some terrible emotion—that it recalled to him some very violent love !

If Jacques divines all this, if in his own mind he treats what passes within me as a contemptible childishness, he is wrong. If he were in my place, he would perhaps suffer more than I do, for he has no rivals in my past ; nothing that I do, nothing that I think, could possibly afflict him ; he may look without fear into my life—embrace it all in one glance, and assure himself that he is my only love. But his life is to me an impenetrable abyss : what I know of it resembles those sinister meteors which dazzle and mislead. The first time that I gathered up these shreds of uncertain information, I was terrified : I feared lest Jacques might be inconstant or deceitful ; I feared lest his love might not be worth the price at which I valued it ; my veneration was shaken. Now I know what Jacques is, and what his love is worth : its value is so great, that I would give a whole lifetime of quiet, apart from him, for the two months which I have just passed with him. I know him to be incapable of deceiving me, or of promising his heart in vain.

I scarcely think any more of the future, but I torment my-

self horribly about the past: I am tortured with jealousy about it. Oh! what would the present be to me, if I were not as sure of him as I am of God! But I could not doubt Jacques' word, and I should not be jealous without reason. The sort of jealousy which I now feel is not mean and suspicious, it is sad and resigned: but oh! how much it pains me!

XXIV.

Jacques to Sylvia.

I KNOW not whose foot it is that has slipped, but the grain of sand has fallen. I have kept careful watch, I have devoted myself with all my might to prevent this accident; but the surface of the lake is troubled. Whence has the evil come? One never knows. One perceives when it exists. I contemplate it with sadness, and without discouragement. There is no remedy for what has happened. But we may raise a barrier against the avalanche, and arrest it midway. This barrier shall be my patience. It must gently oppose itself to the excess of sensibility of a too youthful soul. I have been able to place this rampart between myself and the most unruly tempers: it will be no very difficult task to appease a child who is so simple and so good. She has one virtue which will save us both, loyalty. Her soul is jealous, but her character is noble, and suspicion can not blight it. She is ingenious in tormenting herself about what she does not know; but she believes implicitly what I tell her. May God preserve me from abusing this sacred confidence, or from ceasing to merit it through the slightest untruth! When I can not give her a satisfactory explanation, I prefer not to give her any. This will make her suffer a little longer, but what is to be done? Another would perhaps

descend to those easy artifices by which men patch up, sometimes well, sometimes ill, the quarrels of love : such an expedient seems to me cowardly, and I will never consent to it. The other day a little misunderstanding arose between us, quite sad and very delicate for us both. She began to sing a song which I had heard sung for the first time by the first woman I ever loved. It was a very romantic and a very ideal love, a sort of dream that was never realized, thanks perhaps to my timidity and to the enthusiastic respect which I entertained for a woman who was very similar to all others, as it afterward appeared to me. Certainly neither this woman, nor the love which I had for her, were of a nature to give any reasonable umbrage to Fernande. It was nevertheless the cause of a cloud which came over our happiness. I felt a very lively pleasure in hearing this melodious and simple song, which recalled to me the illusions and the smiling dreams of my early youth. It brought before me a whole phantasmagoria of remembrances. I fancied that I saw again the country where I had loved for the first time, the woods in which I dreamed so madly, the gardens in which I wandered, making bad poetry which I thought so fine : and my heart palpitated again with pleasure and emotion. Certainly there was no regret for this love, which had never existed but in the dreams of an imagination of sixteen. But there is in far-off memories an inexplicable magic. We love our first impressions with a paternal love. We cherish our past self, perhaps because we weary of our present. However this may be, I felt myself for an instant transported into another world, one for which I would not exchange that in which I am now living, but one into which I had never thought to return, and in which I took a few steps with great delight. It seemed to me that Fernande divined the pleasure which she caused me, for she sang like an angel ; and after she had ceased, I remained intoxicated and speechless with beatitude. All at once I perceived that she was weeping, and as something similar had already hap-

pened to us, I guessed what was passing in her mind, and felt a little vexed at it. To resist a first impression is beyond the force of the firmest man : it is given only to villains to feign in such moments. All that a man of sincerity can do is, to be silent, or to hide himself. I went out, therefore, and a short walk dissipated this slight irritation.

But I felt that it would be impossible for me to console Fernande by an explanation. It would have been necessary to make her believe that she was mistaken in her suspicions, by telling her a lie, or to attempt to explain to her the difference which there is between enjoyment of a romantic remembrance, and regret for a forgotten love. This is a distinction which she would never have been willing to comprehend, and one which is really beyond her age, and perhaps her character. This avowal of a very innocent sentiment would have pained her more than my silence. I have repaired it all by proving to her that I was ready to sacrifice my little pleasure to her susceptibility. I refused to hear again the ballad which, through a little movement of pouting feminine malice, she offered to sing for me a second time, and quietly burnt it. On every occasion, when I can do nothing better, I must have the courage to show no sign of temper. It is true that this causes me some suffering. I have been for so long a time the victim of the outrageous jealousy of certain women, that everything which reminds me of it, ever so distantly, makes me shudder with aversion. I shall accustom myself to it. Fernande has the defects, or rather the inconveniences, of her age, and I have those of mine. Of what use will experience have been to me, if it have not hardened me to suffering? It is for me to watch and to conquer myself. I study myself incessantly, and I make my confession to God in the solitude of my heart, in order to preserve myself from intolerant pride. -In examining myself thus, I have found many spots in myself—many things which should lead me to excuse Fernande's frequent agitations. For example, I

have the sad habit of linking all my present pains to those of the past. A gloomy train of shadows, arrayed in mourning garb, thus hold each other by the hand. The last which is agitated wakens all the others from their slumber. When my poor Fernande grieves me, it is not she who causes me all the pain which I feel. It is the other loves of my life which, like old wounds, begin to bleed anew. Ah ! it is because the past can not be healed.

And yet, ought she to complain of me ? Where is the man who knows better how to enjoy the present ? Where is the man who respects more sacredly the blessings which Heaven accords to him ? How do I prize this diamond which I possess, and from which, with gentle breath, I seek incessantly to blow away the least particle of dust ! Oh ! who would guard it more carefully than I ? But how should children know anything ? I, at least, can compare the past with the present ; and if sometimes I suffer doubly for having already suffered much, still more often do I learn, by this comparison, to relish present happiness. Fernande believes that all men can love as I do. I know that other women can not love as she does. It is I who am the most just and the most grateful. But so should it be yet once more. Alas ! is the period of happiness already passed ? Is the time for courage already come ? Oh ! no, no ! not yet. This would be too soon ! May the one preserve the other, and may happiness be the recompense of courage !

XXV.

Clemence to Germaine.

I AM more grieved than surprised at what has happened. Your troubles appear to me to be the inevitable consequence of an ill-assorted union. In the first place, your husband is too old for you; in the next place, you have taken an entirely wrong position. It might have been possible for a woman of a calm and rather cold disposition, to accustom herself to the inconveniences which I had pointed out to you, and which are but too soon realized. But for a little imaginative head like yours, a man so experienced as M. Jacques, is the worst husband you could meet with. It is not that I throw upon him the blame of all that has happened between you; it seems to me that he is constantly in the right, and it is for this that I pity you. The most unfortunate thing in the world, is to be condemned, by one's position, and the force of circumstances, to be constantly in the wrong. This enthusiastic love which you have worked yourself into feeling for him, is an unnatural sentiment, and destined to be suddenly extinguished, like a fire of straw; but before you come to this point, it will make you suffer cruelly; and, however patient your husband may be, it will render him insupportable in your eyes. It seems to me that passion is altogether contrary to the dignity and to the sanctity of marriage. You imagined that you had inspired your husband with this passion. I doubt it strongly. I believe that you have mistaken for enthusiasm, the vehement caresses which a husband lavishes on his wife during the first days, when she is, like yourself, very young, and remarkably pretty; but be sure that all the ecstasies of your imagination, all the illusions of your soul, are no longer to

the taste of a man of thirty-five, and that from the day when, instead of contributing to his pleasure, they cause him trouble and weariness, he will open your eyes, perhaps somewhat roughly. You will then be in despair, poor Fernande, and he will only have done a very simple and a very legitimate thing. For by what right do you come, with your follies and your caprices, to poison the life of a man who was free and tranquil, and who has sought you in marriage in order to make you share his good fortune, not to exalt you into a jealous and imperious czarina? I see already that you have the talent to make him sufficiently unhappy. This way of spying him, of scrutinizing all his thoughts, of interpreting all his words, must make your love a plague to him; and yet, Fernande, no one can be gentler and more easy to live with, than yourself; no character is further removed from suspicion and from tyranny; no heart can be more generous and more just; but you love, and this is always the effect of love upon woman, when they know not how to conquer it. Take heed to yourself, my dear, I speak to you very hardly, very cruelly; but you seek the support of my reason, and I offer it to you with a firm hand. I have already told you that when you find the truth too hard to be borne, you have only to cease to write to me, and I shall comprehend your silence. I shall never seek to cure you against your will. I am not a vender of counsel. Adieu, my little friend. Try to cure yourself of exaggeration, or you are lost.

XXVI.

Sylvia to Jacques.

You are right, Jacques, in not alarming yourself too much about these light clouds. I know not whether you will love Fernande eternally; I know not whether love is, in its nature, an eternal sentiment; but it is certain that with characters as noble as yours, it should have as long a course as possible, and should not wither in the first months. I see that characters still worse assorted, and less worthy of one another, remain entwined for years, and find it extremely painful to detach themselves. You yourself have experienced this; you have loved women much less perfect than Fernande, and you have loved them long before you began to suffer and to grow weary. It appears to me impossible, then, that the fall of the first grain of sand should have already troubled your love, and that your lake should not again become tranquil and pure. It may be that two great natures have more difficulty in understanding each other, than when one of the two defrays all the cost of sympathy. It may be that before giving themselves up entirely, and abandoning themselves to each other, they need to try each other, to rub off any asperities which may still keep them apart. A great happiness, a long passion, must be purchased at the price of a few sufferings. When one plants a vigorous tree, it suffers and droops for several days before it gets accustomed to the soil, and shows the strength which it is destined to acquire. The little sorrows of your friend prove the excessive delicacy of her love. I would I were loved as you are. Beware, then, how you complain; surmount somewhat of your pride, if need be, and consent, not to lie, but to explain yourself. You injure Fernande

by supposing that she would not comprehend you; she would be flattered at seeing you condescend to the weaknesses of her sex, and to the ignorances of her age; she would exert herself to walk more quickly toward you to arrive at your point of view. What could not be accomplished by a soul like yours, and a tongue so eloquent when you deign to speak? Oh! shut not yourself up in silence! you do not need your strength with this angelic being, who is already on her knees to listen to you. Remember what I was when I first knew you, and what you have made of this soul that slumbered unformed in chaos: what should I have been if you had not descended to me, if you had not revealed to me what you know of God, of men, and of life? Did I not comprehend you? Have I not acquired something of greatness—I, who was but a savage child, incapable, of myself, of good or of evil, amid the darkness of my ignorance? Remember the long walks which we took together upon the Alps, during the holydays. With what avidity did I listen to you! How did I return to my convent enlightened and sanctified! O, my brave Jacques! what a sublime being might you not make of her who is your wife, and who possesses your love! I predict for you a grand destiny with her! Wipe away her beautiful tears; open to her all the treasures of your soul. I shall live in your happiness.

XXVII.

Octave to Sylvia.

WHY, then, have you delayed writing me this letter, which would have spared us so much pain; and why, if Jacques be your brother, have you so long hesitated to avow to me the fact? What an incomprehensible being are you, Sylvia, and what pleasure do you find in making both of us suffer. It is in vain that I contemplate and that I study you; there are days in which I know not whether you are the first or the last of women. I ask myself whether your pride betokens the most sublime virtue, or the effrontery of hypocritical vice. Ah! do not overwhelm me with your cold and scornful raillery; do not tell me that no one imposes upon me the duty of loving you, and that I am free to renounce you. I am quite sufficiently unhappy; do not glory so much in your disdain and your indifference. You would be only more worthy of love if you were less strong and less cruel.

And you! have you never had moments of weakness and of uncertainty with me? have you not accused me of many faults which you have forgiven? Why rail so harshly against the distrust of my soul? why tell me that I do not love you from the moment when I doubt you? Do you really know what love is, that you speak in such a manner? But you have loved me, since you have often recalled me after having repulsed me; and you love me still, since, after three months of obstinate silence, you write to me to wash yourself from my suspicions. It is very laconic, and very haughty, this justification of yours! I would not dare confess to any one how much you have the mastery over me, so much am I lowered and humiliated by your love. Oh!

Heaven! and you could be an angel if you would; it is pride which makes a demon of you! When you abandon yourself to your sensibility, you are so beautiful, so adorable! I have passed such beautiful days with you! Are they, then, lost for ever? No, I can not renounce them; be it strength or weakness, cowardice or courage, I will return to you! I will press you in my arms; I will force you again to believe in me, and to love me, should I have but one day of this happiness, and remain degraded in my own eyes all the rest of my life. I know that I shall be again unhappy with you; I know that after having excited me to madness, you will drive me from you with an abominable coolness. You do not, or you will not, comprehend, that to be able to return to your feet with a soul still bleeding from doubt and suspicion, I must love you with an unbridled passion. You tell me that I know not what it is to love. You imagine yourself to be very sublime and very generous toward me, because you pardon me for having suspected what all other men would have supposed in my place. You have a soul of brass; you break all that approaches you, and will not consent to bend to any of the realities of life. How can you wish me always to follow you blindly in that imaginary world in which I never set my foot before I knew you? Ah! without doubt, if you are all that you appear to my enthusiasm, you are very great, and I ought to pass my life enchained at your feet. If you are what my reason sometimes divines, hide the truth from me, deceive me skilfully; for a malison be on you if you unmask yourself! Adieu! Receive me as you will, in three days I shall be at your feet.

XXVIII.

Fernande to Clémence.

You humiliate me—you crush me. If what you teach me be truth, it is very bitter, my poor Clémence. You see, nevertheless, that I accept it, cruel as it is, and that I always come back to you, although to be more unhappy than before, when you have replied to me. I am then to blame? Alas! I thought that with an unhappiness like mine, one could not be culpable! The wicked are they who laugh at the sorrows of others; and as for me, I weep for those of Jacques even more than for my own; I know well that I afflict him, but have I the strength to hide my grief? Can one dry one's tears? Can one impose upon oneself a law, to be insensible to that which rends the heart? If any one ever arrived at this virtue, he must have suffered much before attaining it; his heart must have bled cruelly! I am too young to be able to disguise my countenance, and to hide my emotion; and then, Jacques is not one whom it would be possible for me deceive. This struggle with myself could only serve, then, to augment my pain. It is my sensibility, it is my love, that would have to be stifled! Oh, Heaven! you speak to me of vanquishing it! This very idea gives it more intensity. What would become of me, now that I have known what love is, if I found my heart empty? I should die of weariness. I would rather die of grief; it would be a less lingering death.

You take Jacques' part. You are quite right; he is an angel; he should be loved by a soul as strong, as calm as yours. But am I then unworthy of him? Am I not as sincere and devoted as it is possible to be? No; what I feel for him is not the gleamings of enthusiasm; it is a constant,

eternal veneration. He loves me truly; I know it; I feel it. Do not tell me that he loves in me only my youth and my freshness. If I believed it!—but no, that idea is too cruel! You are inexorable in your contempt for love; your observing mind judges all things without pity; but by what right do you speak to me of a sentiment which you have never experienced. If you knew how much such a doubt would make me suffer, if once admitted into my heart, you would not have the cruelty to suggest it to me. Ah, well! if it were thus—if Jacques loved me only as a plaything.—I, who have devoted my whole life—I, who love him with all the force of my soul—I should try to love him no more. But that would be impossible for me—I should die.

My poor head is sick. And what a letter have you written me! I could not hide the impression which it made upon me, and Jacques inquired of me whether I had received any bad news. I replied that I had not. "Then," said he, "it is a letter from your mother." I was dying of fear lest he should ask to see it; and, quite speechless, I hung down my head without replying. Jacques struck on the table with a violence which I never saw in him before. "Let not that woman try to poison your heart," he exclaimed; "for I swear by the honor of my father, that she shall dearly pay for the least attempt against the sanctity of our love." I started up, quite terrified, and fell back upon my chair. "Well, what is the matter with you?" said he. "Yourself? what have you against my mother? what has she done to you, to make you so angry?"—"I have reasons which you do not know, Fernande, and which are strong as the hills; may you never know them! but for the love of our repose, hide from me your mother's letters, and above all, the effect which they produce upon you."—"I assure you that you are mistaken, Jacques," cried I; "this letter is not from my mother; it is from——"—"I do not want to know," said he, hastily; "do not do me the injustice to reply to questions which I shall never ask you." And he went out,

I have not seen him all day. Oh, God! we are almost in a quarrel! And why? Because I thought he looked sad, and was troubled about it. Oh, if there were not at the bottom of all this, something of reality, we should not be where we now are. Jacques has had sorrows which he hides from me, with a kind intention, no doubt; but he has been mistaken; if he had revealed to me the first, I should not have desired to question him about the others; while now, I always imagine that he is hiding some mystery, and this does not seem to me to be just, for my soul is open to him, and he may read in it at every instant. I see plainly that he is preoccupied; something takes away his mind from the love that he had for me. Sometimes he has a frown that makes me tremble from head to foot. It is true, that if I have the courage to speak to him, it is soon dissipated, and I find his expression kind and tender as before. But formerly I never displeased him. I told him with confidence all that passed in my mind; when I was absurd, he contented himself with smiling, and he took pains to correct my judgment with affection. Now, I see that certain words, said almost at random, have a bad effect on him; he changes countenance, or begins to hum that little song which he sang at Smolensk, when a ball was extracted from his breast. Apparently, a word from me causes him the same pain!

It is six o'clock in the evening; Jacques, who is ordinarily so exact, and who so scrupulously avoids causing me the slightest uneasiness, or the most trifling impatience, has not yet come in to dinner. Can it be that he is sulky? Or has he been so much grieved as to have remained absorbed in this manner since noon? I am distressed; what if some accident have happened to him! if he love me no longer! Perhaps I have so far displeased him to-day, that he feels a repugnance against seeing me. Oh, Heaven! the sight of me may have become odious to him! All this causes me a horrible pain. I am pregnant, and I suffer much. The anxieties to which I give way make me still worse. I must

bring this state of things to an end; I must throw myself at Jacques' feet, and conjure him to forgive my follies. This can not humiliate me; it is not to my husband, but to my lover, that my prayers will be addressed. I have offended his delicacy; I have afflicted his heart; he must forgive me, once for all, and let everything be forgotten. For several days, all explanations have ceased between us. This is killing me. My soul is full of sobbings, which choke me; I must give them vent on his bosom. He must give me back all his tenderness; that I may recover the pure and rapturous happiness which I have already tasted.

Sunday morning.—Oh, my friend, how unhappy I am! Nothing succeeds with me, and a fatality turns to evil all that I attempt in order to save myself. Yesterday, Jacques came in at half-past six; his manner was perfectly calm, and he embraced me as though he had forgotten our little altercations. I know Jacques now; I know what efforts he makes over himself, to vanquish his displeasure; I know that concentrated grief is a red-hot iron, which devours the heart. It was with difficulty that I constrained myself to seem tranquil through dinner; but, as soon as we were alone, I threw myself, weeping, at his feet. Can you imagine what he did? Instead of taking me in his arms, and drying my tears, he broke from my caresses, and rose with a furious air. I hid my face in my hands, that I might not see him in that state. I heard his voice, trembling with anger, saying, "Rise up, and never put yourself thus before me again!" Then I felt the courage of despair. "I will remain thus," cried I, "until you tell me what I have done to have lost your love."—"You are crazy," he replied, in a softened tone; "and can only invent all sorts of fancies, by which to trouble our peace, and spoil our happiness. Let us explain, let us weep, since all these emotions are necessary to feed your love; but, in the name of Heaven, get up, and let me never again see you thus." This reply seemed to me very hard and very cold, and I fell back, half-crushed

by dejection and grief. "Must I raise you against your will," said he, taking me in his arms, and carrying me to the sofa; "what a rage all these women have for throwing their souls outside of them, as if they were upon the stage of a theatre! Does one suffer less, does one love more coldly, when one remains standing, and without splitting one's breast with sobs? What will you do, poor children, when the thunderbolt falls upon your heads?"—"All that you say is horrible," I replied. "Is it disdain that makes you wish to free yourself from my love? Does it trouble you already?" He sat down beside me, and remained silent, his head bent down, his manner resigned, but profoundly sad. He let me weep a long time; then he tried to take my hands, but I saw that this mark of affection cost him an effort, and I hastily withdrew them. "Alas! alas!" said he, and he went out. I called him back, but in vain, and I nearly fainted. Rosette, in bringing lights into the saloon, found me motionless. She carried me to bed, and undressed me, while they called my husband. He came, and showed much interest. I was extremely impatient to be alone with him, hoping that he would say something that would console me entirely. I saw so much emotion in his face. I could not hide the annoyance which Rosette's interminable attentions caused to me. At length I spoke to her rather harshly, and Jacques said a few words in her favor. My nerves were really sick. I know not how it was, but the way in which Jacques seemed to interpose between me and my waiting-maid, caused me a feeling of anger that I could not control. Several times, already, during these last days, I had been impatient with this girl, and Jacques had blamed me for it. "I know very well, that on every occasion, you prefer to think that Rosette is right, and that I am wrong." "You are really ill, my poor Fernande," he replied; "Rosette, you make too much noise about the bed; go, I will ring if I want you." I felt at once how unjust and foolish I had been. "Yes, I am ill," I replied, as soon as we

were alone, and I hid my face, weeping, on his bosom. He consoled me, lavishing on me the tenderest caresses, and giving me the sweetest names. I had not strength to ask any other explanation, so much was my head shattered. I fell asleep on Jacques' shoulder. But this morning, when I rang for my maid I saw another face, ugly and unmeaning enough. "Who are you?" said I, "and where is Rosette?" "Rosette is gone," said Jacques to me, coming out of his room to reply to my question. "I wanted some diligent and honest person on my farm at Blossé, to superintend the spinning of silk, and I have sent Rosette thither for the rest of the season; and this is her sister, whom I have sent for to come and wait on you, until you can find some one in her place." I was silent, but I thought this lesson very harsh and very cold. Oh, I had comprehended very truly the affair of the ballad.

And now, what is to be done? I see that my happiness is departing, day by day, and I know not how to stay it. Evidently, Jacques is growing tired of me; and it is my own fault. I do not see that he has done me the least wrong. Neither do I see, any more, that I am really culpable toward him. We pain each other mutually, as by a kind of fatality. Perhaps he takes a wrong course, with regard to me. He is too grave, too silent in his resolves. The resolutions which he forms—the promptitude with which he cuts through the subjects of trouble between us—show, it seems to me, a sort of contemptuous haughtiness toward me. A word of gentle reproach—a few tears shed together, and the caresses of reconciliation—would be worth far more. Jacques is too accomplished; that alarms me. He has no faults, no weaknesses; he is always the same—calm, equal, considerate, equitable. It seems as though he were inaccessible to the irregularities of human nature, and could only tolerate them in others, by the aid of a mute and courageous generosity. He will not enter into parley with them. There is too much pride in this. As for me, I am

a child. I need some one to guide me, and to raise me when I fall. Yes, you were right, Clémence; I begin to think that Jacques' character is not quite young enough for me. It is from this that my unhappiness will proceed; for, on account of his perfection I love him more than I should love a young man, and his exalted reason will, perhaps, prevent me from ever arriving at a good understanding with him.

XXIX.

Jacques to Sylvia.

I HAVE not faltered in my resolution—I have not once abandoned myself to impatience—I have committed no injustice—I have not assumed the tone of a husband—yet the evil, it seems to me, makes rapid progress, and if some unforeseen circumstance do not occur, to turn it aside—if some revolution do not take place in Fernande's ideas—we shall soon have ceased to be lovers. I suffer, I confess it. There is but one happiness in the world, and that is love; all else is nothing; yet we must make a virtue of accepting it. I will accept all—I will content myself with friendship—I will complain of nothing; but let me shed in your bosom some few bitter tears which the world shall not see, and which Fernande, above all, shall not have the grief of adding to her own. Six months of love! it is very little! and of this, many days, among these last, have been poisoned! If it be the will of Heaven, be it so; I am ready for fatigue, and for sorrow; but once more, it is losing very soon a felicity, in the bosom of which I flattered myself that I should rest enraptured for a longer time.

But what have I to complain of? I knew well that Fernande was a child; that her age and her disposition must inspire her with sentiments and thoughts which I no longer

retain; I knew that I should have neither the right nor the will to consider this as a crime in her. I was prepared for all that happens to me. I was mistaken only upon one point—the duration of our illusion. The first transports of love are so violent and so sublime, that everything bends to their power. All difficulties become smooth; all the germs of dissension are paralyzed; all proceeds at the will of this sentiment, which has, with reason, been called the soul of the world, and which may well have been made the god of the universe; but, when it is extinguished, all the nakedness of real life reappears, its smallest hollows sink into deep ravines, and its roughnesses swell into mountains. Courageous traveller! thou must journey along an arid and perilous road to the day of thy death! Happy he who can hope to feel again a new love! God has long blessed me; he has long given me the faculty of healing and of renewing my heart at this divine flame. But my time is ended—I have come to the last turn of the wheel—I may not, I can not, love again. I believed, at least, that this last love would bring back warmth to the last years of my heart's youth, and would prolong them. I have not yet ceased to love. I should be ready, if Fernande could calm her agitations, and repair, of her own accord, the harm which she has done us, to forget these storms, and to return to the rapture of the first days; but I do not flatter myself that such a miracle could take place in her; she has already suffered too much. Before long, she will detest her love. She has made a torment of it, a garment of penance, which she still wears from enthusiasm and devotion. These are the dreams of a young woman. Devotion kills love, and changes it into friendship. Well, friendship will remain to us. I will accept hers, and, for a while, will still leave to mine the name of love, that she may not despise it. My love! my poor, last love! I will embalm it in silence, and my heart shall be its sepulchre for ever; never again will it open to receive a living love. I feel in my soul the lassitude of an

old man, and the chill of resignation which invades all its fibres; Fernande alone can reanimate it, for it is yet warm from her clasp. But Fernande leaves the sacred fire to die out, and slumbers, weeping. The hearth grows cold; soon will the flame have taken flight for ever.

You give me counsel which it is quite impossible for me to follow. You put your finger upon the wound; when you say that we do not understand each other. But you would persuade me to make myself understood, and you do not reflect that love does not manifest itself like the other sentiments. Friendship reposes upon facts, and proves itself by services; esteem may be submitted to mathematical calculations; love comes from God, returns to him, and again descends at the will of a power which is not in the hands of man. Why do you not make yourself understood by Octave? For the very same reasons which prevent Fernande from understanding me. Octave can not attain to that degree of enthusiasm which makes love great and sublime; Fernande has already lost it. Suspicion has prevented the development of Octave's love; a little egotism has paralyzed that of Fernande. How would you have me prove to her that she should prefer me to herself, and hide her sufferings from me, as I hide mine from her? I have the strength to shut up my sorrows, and to stifle my little resentments. Every day, after a few moments of solitary conflict, I return to her without bitterness, ready to forget all, without ever addressing to her a complaint; but I find her eyes tearful, her heart oppressed, and reproach upon her lips—not the coarse and evident reproach which would cure me at once, both of love and of friendship, but the delicate, timid reproach, which leaves a wound, imperceptible, but deep. That reproach I comprehend, I gather; it sinks into the depths of my heart. Oh! what suffering for a man who would have forfeited his life rather than have given it birth, and who feels, in the most secret folds of his soul, that he has never deserved it! She suffers, unhappy child! because

she is weak—because she abandons herself to these miserable griefs, which I stifle—because she feels that she is wrong in giving herself up to them, and that she is losing her dignity in my eyes. Then her pride suffers, and my efforts to raise and to cure her, are in vain; she attributes them to generosity, to compassion, and is only the more saddened and humiliated. My love becomes too severe for her; she thinks herself obliged to implore it; she no longer comprehends it.

Some time since, she threw herself at my feet, to ask it of me again. A husband might have been touched by this act of submission; as for me, I was revolted by it. It recalled to me the stormy scenes which I have several times had to endure, when, having lost my esteem, the women whom I have loved have wished, in vain, again to take possession of my love. To see Fernande in this situation—she, so holy, and so virgin from all stain—it was for me a horror. Oh! it is not thus that I would be loved—to inspire in my wife the sentiment which a slave has for his master! It seemed to me that she put herself into this attitude to make an abjuration of our love, and to promise me some other sentiment. She did not understand the pain she caused me, and perhaps, in her heart, she thought it a crime in me that I was not grateful for what she had attempted for my cure. Poor Fernande!

You advise me to be with her what I have been with you. You think, then, Sylvia, that it is I who have made you what you are? You think that one human creature can give strength and greatness to another? Remember the fable of Prometheus, whom the gods punished, not for having made a man, but for having flattered himself with having given him a soul. Yours was already vast and burning, when I shed into it the feeble light of my reflection and experience; but, far from exalting it, I attempted only to enlighten it. I tried to direct toward an end worthy of itself, the vigor of its flight, and the ardor of its affections. I did nothing but

open a way for it; it was God who gave it the wings which have borne it upward. You had been reared in the desert; your intelligence was so green and so fresh, that it opened spontaneously to every new idea; but that would not have sufficed, if your heart had not been prepared for the sentiments of which I spoke to you; you would have comprehended, without feeling them. In a word, I sought not to inspire you—I tried only to instruct you. If I had not done so, perhaps you would never have learned the use of the gifts that God had given you; but certainly they could not have failed to teach you to be noble and firm in your conduct, upon all important occasions of your life.

Fernande, with a less powerful organization, has had to combat the unfortunate influences of the prejudices in the midst of which she has grown up; better perhaps than all that appertains to society, she can never divest herself with impunity of the ideas which society reveres. None had fashioned for her, as for you, a body and a soul of iron; all had spoken to her of prudence, of reason, of certain calculations by which to escape from certain sorrows, and certain reflections by which to attain to a certain competency, which society permits to women upon certain conditions. It was not said to her, as it was to you: "The sun is fierce, and the wind is rough; man is made to brave the tempest upon the sea, woman to tend flocks upon the scorching mountain. In winter come snow and ice; thou wilt go to the same places, and wilt seek to warm thyself at a fire which thou wilt kindle with dry branches from the forest: if thou wilt not do so, thou must support the cold as thou canst! Behold the mountain, behold the sea, behold the sun: the sun scorches, the sea engulfs, the mountain fatigues. Sometimes wild beasts carry off the flocks, and the child who tends them! Thou wilt live in the midst of all this as thou canst: if thou be wise and brave, thou shalt have some shoes to wear on Sundays." What a lesson for a woman who was, at a future day, to live in society, and to profit by the refinements of

civilization ! Instead of all this, Fernande has been taught how to avoid the sun, wind, and fatigue. As to the dangers which you quietly braved, she hardly knew whether they could exist in the country in which she lived : she read with terror an account of them in some book of travels in the New World. Her moral education was the consequence of this physical training. No one had the wisdom to say to her, "Life is arid and terrible ; repose is a chimera ; prudence is useless ; reason itself serves only to dry up the heart : there is but one virtue, the eternal sacrifice of self."

It was with this severity that I treated you when you addressed to me your first questions ; it was to put far from you the fairy tales on which you had been fed ; but this love of the marvellous had injured nothing in you. When again I met you at the convent, you no longer believed in prodigies, but you still loved them, because your imagination found in them the allegorical personification of those ideas of chivalrous equity, and of enterprising courage, which arose out of your character. I spoke to you of living, and of suffering ; of accepting every ill, and of never allowing the love of justice in your soul to bend to any of the laws of this world. I found it unnecessary to say more to you ; you had, in your character, peculiarities which the world would have called defects, and which I respected as the consequences of a hardy and generous temperament. I have a horror of that conventional temperament which society makes for women, and which is the same for all. Fernande's good heart, so sincere and ingenuous, revolted against this yoke, and I loved her because of her hatred of the pedantry and falseness of her sex. But that strong education which I had not feared to give to you, I should never have dared to essay with Fernande : she had created for herself a world of illusions, as is the case with all those women whose loving hearts strive to resist the withering bands of prejudice ; she had that adorable but unfortunate temperament which is styled romantic, and which consists in not seeing things as

they are, either in society or in nature; she believed in an eternal love, and in a repose which nothing could disturb! For one moment I longed to try her courage and to tell her that she deceived herself; but my courage failed me. When she called me her Messiah; when, moreover, at seventeen, she treated me as the good genius of a fairy tale, as you had done at ten, how could I resolve to say to her, "Repose does not exist; love is, at most, but the dream of a few years; the existence which I ask you to share with me will be painful and sorrowful, as are all existences in this world"? I tried hard to make her comprehend it when she demanded of me, poor child that she is! the vow of an eternal love. She professed to accept all the dangers of the future; she persuaded herself at least that she accepted them: but I saw clearly that she did not believe in them. And now her discouragement and her consternation sufficiently prove to me that she had not foreseen the most simple vexations of ordinary life. Ah! what course should I now take with her? Should I go to her as a pedagogue, to talk of sufferings, of resignation, and of silence? Should I waken her all at once from the midst of her dream, and say to her, "Thou art too young: come to me, who am old, that I may make thee old also! See, thy love is departing: so must it be, and so will it be with all the joys of thy life?" No, I have not been able to give her the present: I will at least leave to her the future. I can not talk with her: you see it is so! I should but make myself detested, and some morning she would read my thirty-five years in my face. I must treat her as a child as long as possible; in fact, I might be her father: why should I derogate from that character? I will console her, I will prolong her love; if it be possible, only by gentle words and affectionate caresses; and when she no longer loves me save as a father, I will free her from my caresses, and surround her with my cares. I do not feel either offended or wounded by her conduct; I accept, without anger and with-

out despair, the loss of my illusions : it is neither her fault nor mine.

But I am sad unto death. O solitude ! solitude of the heart !

X X X.

Fernande to Clemente.

JACQUES has given me a great pleasure to-day : he has given me a proof of confidence. "My friend," said he to me, "I wish to invite to our house a person whom I love very much, and whom, I am sure, you will love also. You must help me to draw her from the solitude in which she lives, and persuade her to come to us at least for a time." — "I will do what you wish, and I will love whomsoever you wish me to love," I answered, half sad and half merry, as I often am now. "I have never spoken to you," he replied, "of a friend who is very dear to me, and whom I have, so to speak, brought up. She is the natural child of my best friend, who commended her to my care on his death-bed. Do not ever question me on this subject : I took an oath that I would never divulge the name of this young person's parents except under certain circumstances of which I alone can be the judge. I placed her in a convent, and established her, on quitting it, in the different countries in which she wished to live : first in Italy, then in Germany, now in Switzerland : she lives secluded from society in an independence which the world would think singular, but which is both reasonable and legitimate in the case of one who asks nothing of the world, and does not grow weary of isolation."

"Is she young ?" I inquired. "She is twenty-five." — "And pretty !" I added with precipitation. "Very pretty," replied Jacques, without seeming to observe the blush that

mounted to my face. I asked many other questions about her character, to which Jacques replied in a manner calculated to make me love the unknown; but nevertheless it was with considerable effort over myself that I told him I should be very happy to have her with me: and when I found myself alone, I felt that I was suffering all the torments of jealousy. I did not suppose, certainly, that Jacques could be in love with this woman, and that he wished to bring her into our house to make her again his mistress. Jacques is too noble, too delicate for that: reason and honor have doubtless vanquished this too lively tenderness for his protégée. But he may have been often moved by her presence: he can not have seen, with impunity, so much beauty, spirit, and talent; he may perhaps have thought, more than once, of making her his wife, and he may have retained for her that indefinable sentiment which one must feel for the object of an ancient love. Jacques is so strange sometimes! Perhaps he wishes to place her between us as a peacemaker in the midst of our troubles; perhaps he will propose her to me as a model, or at least, as she will be much more perfect than I, he will make, in spite of himself, when he thinks I am wrong, comparisons between her and myself which will not be to my advantage. This idea filled me with sorrow and anger; I know not why it was, but I felt an invincible want to question Jacques again, yet I dared not do so, and I feared lest he should divine my suspicions. At length, toward evening, while we were chatting pleasantly upon general subjects, which bore a distant relation to our position, I took courage, and, pretending to be in jest, I asked him, almost plainly, what I desired to know. He was silent for a few moments. I observed his countenance, and it was impossible for me to interpret its expression. Jacques is often thus, and I defy any one, no matter who, to know whether he is calm or dissatisfied in those moments. At last, he held out his hand to me, saying gravely, "Do you think me capable of a baseness?"—"No," cried I earnest-

ly, raising his hand to my lips. "Of a treason?"—"No, nō, never!"—"But of what, then, for you have suspected me of something?" added he, regarding me with that air of penetration which I can never resist. "Well, yes," I replied with embarrassment, "I have accused you of imprudence."—"Explain yourself," said he. "No," replied I; "give me an oath, and I shall be tranquil for ever."—"An oath between us!" said he, in a tone of reproach. "Ah! you know that I am weak," I replied, "and that I must be treated with condescension: do not let your pride be revolted; be humane with me, and swear to me that you have never been in love with this young person, and that you are sure that you never will be." Jacques smiled, and desired me to dictate the formula of the oath. I told him to swear by his honor, and by our love. He consented with gentleness, and asked me if I were satisfied: Then, seeing that I had been foolish, I felt very much ashamed, and feared that I had offended him; but he reassured me with his affectionate words and manner. So now I think that I did right in being frank, and in confessing to him my disquiet without any false shame. With a few words of explanation, he has tranquillized me for ever, and I am no longer at all unwilling to welcome his friend. Perhaps if I had always told him what was passing in my poor head, we might never have suffered. Since this explanation I have felt more happy and tranquil than I have been for a long time. I am grateful to Jacques for having been so kind as to reassure me, by a formula which now seems to me to have been really childish, but without which I should perhaps have been in despair to-day. In general, Jacques treats me either too much as a child, or too much as a great character; he seems to think that I can understand him when he says but half a word, and that I should never put an unreasonable interpretation upon anything he says. If he perceives that it is otherwise with me, he despairs of being able to correct my judgment, and abandons me to my error with a sort of dis-

dain which offends me, instead of bestowing on me a few words which would cure me completely. Jacques is too perfect for me, this is very certain : he can not sufficiently hide from me my inferiority : he can console my heart, but he knows not how to spare my self-love. I feel what is needed in order to be his equal, and I feel that in me this is lacking. Oh how different is my fate from what I had imagined it would be ! Neither my hopes nor my fears have been realized : Jacques is a thousand-fold above all that I had hoped : I had no idea of a character so generous, so calm, so imperturbable ; but I counted on joys which I do not find with him—more ease, more openness, more *companionship*. I fancied myself his equal, and I am not.

XXXI.

Jacques to Sylvia.

FERNANDE now appears to caress her puerilities. At first she blushed for them, she hid them ; I pretended, in order to spare her pride, not to perceive them ; I could then hope that she would vanquish them. Now she shows them ingenuously ; she laughs at them, she almost boasts of them. I have come to bend entirely to them, to treat her altogether as a child of ten. Oh ! if I had ten years less, I would try to show her that, instead of advancing in the moral life, she loses ground, and wastes, in shunning every little thorn in her path, the time which she should employ in opening for herself a new road, more beautiful and more spacious ; but I have too great a dread of enacting the part of a pedant, and I am too old to risk it. A few days ago, I spoke to her of you, and of my desire to persuade you to pass some time with us. The questions which she put to me re

specting your age and appearance, showed me, plainly enough, her perplexities ; and she ended by requiring me to take a solemn oath, that I had never had for you any other sentiments than those of a brother. She did not find in her heart, in her esteem for me, any guaranty against these miserable suspicions ; she believed me capable of degrading and driving her to despair, for my pleasure ! She gave herself up to these fears through a whole day ; and when I had taken the oath which she required, she was perfectly contented. Alas ! all women, then, except you, Sylvia, are alike ! I did with gentleness what Fernande demanded ; but I seemed to read again one of the eternal chapters of my life !

Oh ! how insipid and monotonous is this life—in appearance so agitated, so varied, and so romantic ! Facts differ, one from another, only through a few circumstances, men through a few diversities of character ; but I see myself, at thirty-five, as sad, as lonely in their midst, as when I took my first steps ; I have lived in vain. I have never found any accord, any similarity, between myself and anything that exists. Is it my fault ? is it that of others ? is my nature devoid of sensibility ? am I incapable of love ? have I too much pride ? It seems to me that no one loves with more devotedness and passion ; it seem to me that my pride bends to everything, and that my affection stands the test of the most terrible experiences. If I look into my past life, I see only abnegation and sacrifice. Why, then, so many altars overthrown, so many ruins, and so frightful a silence, as of death ? What have I done, that I am left standing thus alone amid the wrecks of all that I have thought I possessed ? Does my breath make everything fall to dust that approaches it ? And yet I have broken nothing, profaned nothing. I have passed in silence from the oracles that have proved themselves impostors ; I have abandoned the worship that misled me, without writing my malediction upon the walls of the temple ; no one ever withdrew from

a snare with more resignation or more calmness. But Truth, whom I followed, held up her sparkling mirror, and lies and illusion fell, broken and shattered, like the idol Dagon before the face of the true God; and I have passed on, throwing behind me a saddened glance, and saying, "Is there nothing true, nothing solid, in life, but this divinity who walks before me, never pausing, and destroying everything in her path?"

Forgive me these sad thoughts, and think not that I abandon my task; I am more than ever determined to accept life. In two months I shall be a father; I do not seize on this hope with the transports of a young man; but I receive this solemn blessing from God, with the self-collectedness of a man who comprehends the duties which it imposes on him. I no longer belong to myself; I will no longer give to my sad thoughts the direction which they have so often taken. I can not abandon myself to those puerile joys of paternity, to those ambitious dreams in which I see others indulge with regard to their posterity; I know that I shall have given life to one more unfortunate upon the earth, that is all. What I have to do, is to teach him how to suffer without being debased by misfortune.

I hope that this event will turn the current of Fernande's thoughts, and direct all her solitudes toward an end more useful, than her incessant tormenting and questioning of a heart that belongs to her, and that made no reservations when it gave itself to her. If she be not cured of this moral malady when she has her infant in her arms, you must come and seat yourself between us, Sylvia, to make our life sweeter, and to prolong, as much as possible, this half love, this half happiness, which remains to us. I hope a great change from your presence. Your strong and resolved character will, at first, astonish Fernande, and will then make upon her, I have no doubt, a salutary impression; you will protect my poor love against the counsels of her pusillanimity, and, perhaps, against those of her mother.

She receives letters which greatly increase her sadness. I do not wish to learn anything with regard to them; but I see clearly that some dangerous friendship, or some cruel malice, envenoms her sorrows. Oh! why can she not confide them to a heart worthy of receiving them, and capable, like yours, of softening them! But the outpourings of friendship are fatal, for a character like hers, when not received by a soul of choice and noble quality. I can do nothing to remedy this evil. Never will I play the master, even should my happiness be devoured within my arms.

XXXII.

Fernande to Clementine.

Our days flow slowly and sadly along. You are right; I need something to divert me. With the sort of spleen which I have, one soon dies at my age, if abandoned to the evil influence; and one is cured quickly and easily, if taken away from these mournful preoccupations; for nature has immense resources; but the means to do this just now! I am approaching the period of my confinement, and I suffer so much, and am so fatigued, that I am obliged to remain all day on a couch; I have not the strength to occupy myself about anything. I watch the progress of my preparations, which I am having made by Rosette. I have persuaded Jacques to recall her. She sews very well; she is very gentle, and sometimes quite amusing. When Jacques is not with me, I make her sit by my sofa to divert me; but in an instant she tires me. It seems to me that Jacques has grown terribly grave; he smokes five hours out of six. Formerly I had an extreme pleasure in seeing him stretched out upon the carpet, smoking perfumes; he

is really very handsome in this careless attitude, wrapped in a dressing-gown of flowered silk, which gives him quite the air of a sultan. But this is a prospect of which I begin to grow weary from continued enjoyment. I do not understand how one can stay so long in this gloomy silence, in this immobility, without oneself becoming a carpet, cushion, or tobacco-smoke. Jacques seems to be drowned in beatitude. Of what can he be thinking so long? how can so active a mind subsist in so indolent a body? Sometimes I fancy that his imagination is paralyzed, that his soul slumbers, and that one of these days we shall both be found changed into statues. That pipe begins to annoy me seriously. I should be quite consoled if I could grumble a little about it; but Jacques would immediately break all his pipes with a tranquil air, and deprive himself for ever of what is, perhaps, the greatest pleasure he has in life. Men are very happy in being so easily amused! They pretend that we are childish beings; and yet it would be impossible for me to pass three fourths of the day in chasing from my mouth spirals of smoke, more or less dense. Jacques finds so much delight in it, that no woman will ever do me a greater wrong in his heart, than his pipe of cedar-wood, incrustated with mother-of-pearl. In order to please him, I shall have to envelop myself in a similar rind, and put on a turban of amber, surmounted by a point.

This is the first time, for many a day, that I have had strength enough to laugh at my grievances. What inspires me with this courage, is the hope of soon being the mother of a beautiful little babe, that will console me for all the disdain of M. Jacques. Oh! how I love it already! how I picture it to myself pretty and rosy! Without the castles in the air which I build, from morning to night, on its account, I should perish of melancholy; but I feel that my child will fill the place of everything else to me, that it will occupy me exclusively, that it will dissipate all the clouds that have obscured my happiness. I am very busy

in finding a name for it; I turn over the leaves of all the books in the library, without finding one which seems worthy of my daughter or of my son. I would rather have a girl; Jacques says he wishes it on my account. I think he is a little too indifferent about it. If I give him a son, he will take it as a favor of chance, and will not thank me for it. I remember M. Borel's transports of joy and pride when Eugénie presented him with a son. The poor man could not sufficiently testify his gratitude to her. He went off to Paris, post-haste, to buy her a magnificent casket of jewels. This was very childish for an old soldier, and yet it was touching, as is all that is simple and spontaneous. Jacques is too much of a philosopher to abandon himself to similar follies. He laughs at the long discussions which I have with Rosette about the shape of a cap or the pattern of a little chemise; nevertheless, he has busied himself about the cradle with a great deal of attention; he has had it remade two or three times, because he thought it not sufficiently airy, sufficiently convenient, sufficiently insured against the accidents which might befall his heir. Certainly he will be a good father; he is so gentle, so attentive, so devoted to all that he loves, this poor Jacques! Truly he deserves a more reasonable woman than I am. I bet that with you, Clémence, he would have been the happiest of men. But he must content himself with his poor little fool of a Fernande, for I am not disposed to turn him over to the consolations of another, not even to yours. I see you, here, pinching your lips, with a little disdainful air, and telling me that I am in very bad taste. What can you expect when one is tired out?

My mother writes me letter after letter. She is really very kind to me. Jacques and you are both wrong to bear ill-will against her. She has faults and prejudices which, in intimacy, make her sometimes a little disagreeable; but she has a good heart, and loves me truly. She is more than reasonably uneasy about my state, and talks of coming to

assist at my confinement! I should desire it for myself, but I fear it on account of Jacques, who can not endure her. I am unfortunate in everything. Why this antipathy for a person of whom he knows so little, and who has never been otherwise than friendly toward him? This seems to me unjust, and I do not recognise in this, the calm and cold equity of Jacques. It must be, then, that every one has his caprice, even he who is so perfect, and to whom it is so little becoming!

XXXIII.

Jacques to Sylvia.

My wife is the mother of twins, a son and a daughter, both of them strong and of good constitution. I hope they will both live. Fernande suckles them alternately with a nurse, in order, she says, not to make them jealous; she is so much occupied with them, that henceforth I hope she will have little time to afflict herself with anything not connected with them. Meantime she lavishes on them all her solicitude, and I am obliged to interpose my authority to prevent her from killing them with the excess of her tenderness. She wakens them from their sleep in order to suckle them, and makes them fast when they are hungry. She plays with them as a child with a nest of birds. She is really very young to be a mother! I pass my days beside this cradle. I see that already, I, a man, am necessary to these young creatures, scarcely hatched. The nurse, like all women of her class, is full of senseless prejudices, to which Fernande lends faith more willingly than to the simple counsels of good sense. Happily, she is so sweet and so gentle, that she accords to an affectionate prayer that which is not prompted by her judgment.

I feel, since I have had these two poor children, a gentler melancholy. Bending over them for hours together, I contemplate their calm sleep, and the feeble contractions of their features, which betray, as I imagine, the existence of thought in them. There are, I am sure, vague dreams of unknown worlds in these yet benumbed souls; perhaps they have confused remembrances of another existence, and of a strange journey across the clouds of oblivion. Poor beings, condemned to live in this world, whence came they? will they be more or less unhappy in the life which they begin anew? May I be able to lighten its burden to them for a little while! but I am old, and they will still be young when I die. . . .

I have had a slight altercation with Fernande about their names. I left her entirely free to name them as she pleased, on condition that neither of them should receive the name of her mother; and this name, Robertine, proved to be precisely the one by which she desired to call her daughter. She urged upon me custom, duty. I was almost obliged to tell her that it was her duty to obey me. I have a horror of these words, and of this idea; but I should hate my daughter if she bore the name of such a woman. Fernande wept a good deal, saying that I wished to embroil her with her mother; and she has made herself sick about this disagreement. In truth I am unhappy. You must come to us, my friend; you must try and counteract the influence which is exerted over her to my prejudice. I know not if my prayer be indiscreet: you have told me nothing of Octave for a long time; and, as it seems to me that you purposely avoid speaking of him, I dare not question you. If he be with you, if you are happy, do not sacrifice one of the bright days of your life for my sake; such days are so rare! If you are alone, if you have no dislike to coming, consult yourself.

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XXXIV.

Epître to Octave.

CIRCUMSTANCES connected neither with you nor with myself, and upon which it is impossible for me to give you the least information, oblige me to leave. I can not tell you for how long a time. I would try to explain myself further, and to soften, by promises, whatever may be disagreeable to you in this intelligence, if I believed that your love could stand this test; but, however light it may be, it will still be beyond your strength, and I will not take any useless pains, at which you, yourself, would laugh, at the end of a few days. You are, then, absolutely at liberty to seek any amusements that may suit you. I can do nothing for your happiness, and you still less for mine. We love each other really, but without passion. I have imagined sometimes, and you very often, that this love was much stronger than it is, in fact; but, looking at things as they are, I see that I am your friend, your brother, much more than your companion and your mistress. All our tastes, all our opinions, differ; no characters could be found, more opposite than ours. Solitude, the need of loving, and romantic circumstances, have attached us to each other; we have loved loyally, if not nobly. Your unquiet and suspicious love has made me blush continually, and my pride has often wounded and humiliated you. Forgive me the vexations which I have caused you, as I forgive those which have come to me from you. After all, neither of us has anything wherewith to reproach the other. One can not entirely remake his soul, and this miracle must have been worked in you or in me, before an assorted and durable bond could have been made of our love. We have never deceived, never betrayed one

another; may this remembrance console us for the evils which we have suffered, and may it efface that of our quarrels. I preserve of you the idea of a character, weak, but honest—of a soul, not sublime, but pure. You have, indeed, enough of good qualities to make the happiness of a woman less exacting, and less dreamy, than myself. I do not retain any bitterness against you; if I ever have an opportunity of rendering you a service, I will use it with joy. If my friendship be of any worth to you, be assured that it will never fail you, but whatever of love there may still be in my heart for you, could only serve to make us both suffer. I shall strive to stifle it, and whatever happens, you may dispose of yourself as you think fit; no vestige of this love shall ever encumber the paths of your future.

XXXV.

Fernande to Clemence.

THE unknown has arrived. This morning, Rosette came and called Jacques with an air of mystery, and a few moments afterward, Jacques came back again, leading by the hand a tall young person, in a travelling dress, and pushing her into my arms, said to me, "Here is my friend, Fernande; if you would make me very happy, be hers also." She is so beautiful, this friend, that in spite of myself I stepped back, and rather hesitated to embrace her; but she threw her arms round my neck, using the *thou*, and caressing me with so much frankness and friendliness, that tears came into my eyes, and I began to cry, half for pleasure, half for sadness, and really without well knowing why, as often happens to me. Then Jacques, throwing an arm round each of us, and giving the stranger a kiss on her forehead, and me one on my lips, pressed us both to his heart, saying, "Let

us live together — let us love each other. Fernande, I give thee a kind, a real friend; and to thee, Sylvia, I confide what is dearest in the world to me. Aid me in making her happy; and whenever I do any foolish thing amiss, scold me, for, as for her, she is a child who can not express her will. Oh, my two daughters! love each other for the love of the old Jacques, who blesses you!" And he began to weep like a child. We passed the day together. We walked with Sylvia through the gardens. She manifested extreme tenderness for my twins, and wishes to take the place of Rosette in all the cares which they require. She is truly charming, this Sylvia, with her blunt, kind tone, her large, black, affectionate eyes, and her frank manners. She seems to be Italian, as far as I can judge, by her accent, and by a sort of dialect which she speaks with Jacques. This last point annoys me a little; they can say whatever they please, and I comprehend only a few words of their conversation. But whether I am jealous or not, it is impossible for me not to love a person who seems so well disposed to love me. She retired early, and Jacques thanked me for the kind welcome I had given her, with a warmth of gratitude that gave me both pain and pleasure.

I am very glad to find an opportunity of proving to Jacques that I can submit blindly to him, and that I can sacrifice the weaknesses of my character to the desire of making him happy. But, in fact, do you know, Clémence, that all this is very extraordinary, and that there are very few women who could see, without suffering, so lively a friendship between their husband and another woman, young and beautiful? When I consented to receive her, I did not know, I could not imagine, that he would embrace her, and make use of the *thou* to her also. I know very well that this proves nothing. He has sworn to me that he has never been, and that he will never be, in love with her. Therefore their intimacy can not disturb me. He regards her, and he treats her, as his daughter. Nevertheless, to hear

Jacques use the *thou* to any other woman than myself, has a singular effect upon me. He ought to spare these little susceptibilities : who would not have them in my place ? Tell me what you think of all this, and whether you think I may trust to this Sylvia. I should be very glad to do so, for she pleases me extremely, and it is impossible for me to resist the influence of manners so natural and so affectionate.

XXXVI.

Clemence to Fernande.

I THINK, my friend, that it would be absurd, vile, and unjust, to suspect M. Jacques of having brought his mistress into your house. Therefore I do not see what you torment yourself about, for you can not so lightly esteem your husband as to entertain such a suspicion against him. Of what matter to you is this young person's beauty ? It might be somewhat dangerous if your husband were eighteen years of age. But I really think that he is of an age to be able to withstand such seductions, and that, if he could have been susceptible to her charms, he would not have waited until married to you before abandoning himself to her. Be very sure, then, that you are very foolish, and, I would almost say, very much to blame, in not welcoming this friend with an entire confidence. If this confidence is beyond your strength, why have you required your husband to give you his word ? and how can you feel kindness and friendship for her, if you think her so infamous, so audacious, as to come to supplant you in your own house ? The idea of any danger of this kind never occurred to me ; but from the mo-

ment when you related to me the conversation which you had had with M. Jacques concerning her, I have foreseen very serious inconveniences from this triple friendship. I do not know whether I ought to point them out to you at present. You will not have sufficient character to avoid them, and you will perceive them quite soon enough. The least of all of them will be the judgment which the world will form with regard to this romantic trinity. With regard to things that depart from the accustomed order, I have observed enough to know that appearances do not always prove anything. Thus, you see that, with all my heart, I believe in the honorableness of your intimacy. But the world, which makes no account of exceptions, will cover you with infamy and with ridicule, if you are not upon your guard. This use of the *thou* among you, which, in itself, is innocent and natural, will suffice to blacken, in the minds of all, the affection of M. Jacques for Madame or Mademoiselle Sylvia. And you yourself, poor Fernande! will not be spared. It will be well to give at once to your stranger, in the eyes of the world, another title to intimacy with you than that of friend and adopted daughter of M. Jacques. He must allow her to pass for your companion, and she must not show before strangers how familiar she is with you. Since your husband will not reveal her birth to any one, it would be well to tell an honest lie, and to state privately in the ear of several persons, feigning to confide to them a secret, that Sylvia is his natural sister. The secret would pass in a whisper from mouth to mouth, and would at once put a stop to insolent commentaries. I advise you to speak to your husband about it, to show him my fears as though they came from yourself, and engage him to make use of suitable prudence. I am astonished that he has not done this of his own accord. It may be that Sylvia is in fact his sister, and that this is precisely what he wishes to hide: but how can he have been so far wanting in confidence toward you as not to have informed you of this in secret?

XXXVII.

Bernande to Clemente.

WHAT you advised me to do has not succeeded. I had expressed to Jacques but a very small part of the inconveniences which you pointed out to me, when he looked at me with a stupified air, saying, "Whence have you taken all this prudence? Since when have you troubled yourself to this degree about the world?" He added sadly, "It is true that you are destined to live in it. I deceived myself in imagining that you would bury yourself with me in this solitude. You already feel the desire to plunge into society, and you are troubled at whatever may impede your entrance. It is quite evident."—"Oh! do not think that, Jacques!" I replied; "I shall not be happy except where you are, and where you like to be. I never think of the world: I hardly know what it is. But I speak for the sake of Sylvia's interests and of your own. The reputation of you both is as dear to me as my own." Jacques remained some time without replying, and I remarked that slight contraction of the eyebrow which, with him, expresses concentrated vexation. At the same time there was a smile of irony upon his lips, and I perceived that what I had said seemed to him very ridiculous from my mouth. However, he repressed his inclination to rally me, and replied to me with a calm and serious air: "It is a long time, my dear child, since I broke with the world. It will depend upon you whether I live again in the midst of its pleasures and of its idle turbulence. If it tempt you, we will go. But know that there will never be the least sympathy between it and me, and that, as I yield only to the counsels of my heart or of my conscience, never, to obtain its support and its approbation, will I make

to it the slightest sacrifice. I will say more: my pride will never bend to the least concession. The world will think of this just what it pleases: I have thirty years of honor behind me; if that be not sufficient to shelter me from the most infamous suspicions, so much the worse for the world. I think I may say that this profession of faith is very nearly that of Sylvia; and besides, Sylvia will never sustain any relations with society. She, then, will never have to combat the inconveniences of her independence. As to you, my dear child, you are here in the midst of a desert, where no one will come to spy out our words, our thoughts, or our looks; wickedness itself can not reach us here. When you desire to leave this solitude, be sure that Sylvia will not follow you to Paris, and that your mother's friends will never have occasion to ask you any embarrassing questions on her account."

It seemed to me that Jacques was right, and that I had been guilty of a piece of stupidity. I tried to repair it, but without success: "I am not troubled about the world, I do not wish to enter it," replied I; "but our servants—what will they say, what will they think of your intimacy?"—"I am not accustomed," responded Jacques, with a good deal of haughtiness, "to concern myself as to what my servants may say and think of me. I act in such a manner as never to set them any scandalous example; and I believe that there are no better judges of the innocence of our conduct than these witnesses by whom we are surrounded, and who are acquainted every hour with the most minute details of our life. I know not whether they will consider the presence of Sylvia and her familiarity with us conformable to the laws of decorum, but it is very certain that they will never consider it as contrary to those of honesty." Jacques ceased speaking, and walked up and down the room with a gloomy air. I spoke to him several times, but he did not hear me. At length he was about to leave the apartment, when I sprang toward him. I saw that I had displeased him horribly, and I fancied I

could divine that he had taken some resolution of the kind which last year had caused the disappearance of the unlucky ballad and of poor Rosette. I stopped him. "Listen, Jacques," said I, quite terrified; "I have done wrong, undoubtedly: I have said a thousand absurdities. For the love of Heaven, do not say anything about it to Sylvia! do not take her friendship away from me: it is quite enough to take away your love!" I sank upon a chair—I nearly fainted. Jacques embraced me with the tenderness and the fervor of the first days. "I promise you absolutely to forget this conversation," said he, "and never to speak of it to Sylvia. It is too evident that it was not yourself, but some other who has spoken through your mouth. You are good, my poor Fernande; have the strength, then, to listen to no other counsels than those of your heart."

Jacques is always possessed with the idea that my mother excites me against him. It is very true that she does not much like him; but he is mistaken if he thinks that I recount to her what passes in our house. It is only with you that I can have this confidence. Cursed be the distance that often renders your advice to me more hurtful than useful! Sometimes I explain my situation too badly for you to be able to judge of it correctly; at other times I use unskilfully the means which you give me to ameliorate it. And it must also be confessed that I am very stupid, or very shallow, not to be able to supply what you can not foresee. I was very tranquil and very happy when the idea came to me of making these beautiful overtures which have troubled and affected Jacques so seriously. Our life had become much more agreeable. God grant that it do not again become unhappy through my fault! Sylvia's presence has really done us a great deal of good. It is impossible to be better and more amiable. She is an original character, and such as I have never met with. She is active, proud, and decided. Nothing embarrasses, nothing astonishes her; she has more spirit and wit in her little finger than I have in

my whole body; and her conversation is more instructive to me than all the books I ever read. Less silent and more expansive than Jacques, she divines, better than he, all that I do not comprehend, and anticipates my questions. Although her temper is merry and somewhat mocking, her mind seems to be filled with very mournful ideas, and this surprises me, at her age, and with all the advantages which she has received from nature: she must have had some unfortunate passion. I think her an enthusiast. From the manner in which she manifests her friendship, one sees that her heart is full of fire and devotedness; perhaps, when younger, she may have misplaced her affections. She seems to have cherished a sort of spite against love, for she speaks of it as a dream, without which life is prosaic, but gentle and easy. She often asks me if I do not think that one can do without it. I insist that, when we have known it, we can not renounce it without weariness and sadness; Jacques listens to us with a melancholy air, and, to all that we say, answers with the same sentence: "That is as it may be." With this reply he does not commit himself. We take long walks: Sylvia teaches me botany and entomology. In the evening > we sing trios, which really go very well. Sylvia has an admirable contralto, and sings in so superior a manner, that she would certainly make a large fortune as a singer. "With the contempt which you have for the most deeply-rooted prejudices of the world," I said to her yesterday, "I wonder that a destiny so free and so brilliant has not tempted you."—"I should have tried it very certainly," she replied, "if I had possessed no other means of existence. But the small inheritance that Jacques has transmitted to me from my parents, has always sufficed for my wants. I have been free to follow my tastes, which have led me to an obscure and solitary life. That which of all things would have been odious to me, is, dependence. If I felt myself condemned to live in a certain manner, and in a certain place, I should hold that life and that place in horror, however con-

formable they might otherwise be to my tastes. With the knowledge that I can go to-morrow wherever I choose, I am capable of remaining twenty years in a hermitage."—"Quite alone?" said I. "If I could live there with a heart which thoroughly understood my own, I should live there happy. If not, solitude would be preferable, and quite alone I should live calm. Is not this already a good deal?"—"How!" said I, "has solitude never alarmed you for the future? have you never desired to marry, to have a support, a friend, for your whole life—to be a mother, Sylvia, which is the sweetest thing in the world?"—"I have no fear either for the future or the present," she replied; "I shall have strength to grow old without despair. I do not feel the need of a support. I have sufficient courage for all the evils of life. As to finding a friend who would never fail me, that is a happiness granted to only one woman in a thousand. You are very childish, Fernande, if you think that it enters into the destiny of all to meet with a husband such as yours. And as to the happiness of maternity, I understand it; I should know how to appreciate it: but I have never yet met with the man whom I should have been happy to associate with myself in this sacred character. I do not flatter myself that I shall ever meet with him. If that should happen to me, I shall profit by it, but I am not so romantic as to hope for what is unlikely, nor so weak as to suffer from a desire which I can not realize."—"You have a very strong soul," said I to her. "As for me, if I lost my husband and my children—and I should not hope to replace Jacques—I should not wish, as you say, to associate another man in the sacred office of paternity. I would let myself die."—"You could do so, perhaps," said she; "as for me, I am endowed with such vigor, that I could only get rid of life in some violent manner." She spoke with her rich, deep voice, in the large saloon, where the darkness had gradually stolen upon us; from time to time she struck a melancholy chord on the piano: at this moment she made a modulation so strange

and so sad, that it sent a shiver through all my nerves. "Oh! mon Dieu!" cried I, "you frighten me this evening; I don't know what we can have been talking of!" I went across the saloon to ring the bell, and order candles; and I fancied that I saw some one rise from the sofa at the same moment with myself. I uttered a loud scream, and sprang toward Sylvia, half dead with terror. "Oh! how childish and cowardly you are to be Jacques' wife!" said she in a tone with which a little reproach was mingled. She rose to go and ring the bell. "Do not leave me," I exclaimed; "there is somebody in the room: I am sure of it—there, on the side where the sofa is!"—"If it be so, I do not see what you are afraid of, for it can only be Jacques."—"Is it you, Jacques?" I cried with a trembling voice. Jacques approached us and encircled us with his arms, and embraced us both. "Go, then, and get us some light, wicked one!" said I to him. He went out without replying, and did not come in again until half an hour after. We were already installed, I at my embroidery-frames, Sylvia copying music. "You have a very brave wife," said Sylvia to him in her tone of merriment, which is always rather abrupt. He pretended not to comprehend anything about it, no doubt in order to mystify me, and declared that he had been in the park for more than an hour, and had not quitted it for an instant.

My children are perfectly well, and one can see them grow, every day, like chickens. Jacques really vexes me a little about them sometimes. He busies himself about them more than is proper for a man, and pretends that I do not know how to take care of them. Sylvia comes in between us, carries off the cradle, and says, "This does not concern either of you: these children are mine."

XXXVIII.

. *Fernande to Clemence.*

Monday.—Decidedly, my dear, there is a ghost in the house : Jacques and Sylvia laugh at it ; as for me, I am not at all satisfied : it is either a gentleman with a good share of effrontery who comes to enact a small romance under our windows, or a well-educated robber who takes this method of introducing himself into the house. The gardener saw a shadow gliding round the pond at two o'clock in the morning, and was so much frightened by it that he is sick in consequence. Poor man ! there is no one who pities him but myself. The dogs kept up the most terrific howlings all the evening. I entreated Jacques to see what was the matter, but he thought it of no importance. He went out with Sylvia to see the hay brought in on a neighboring farm, and they would not let me go with them because a heavy dew falls in our valley at this hour, and I have a bad cold. I began to laugh at my own terrors, and was very tranquilly preparing to write to you, when I heard under my window the sound of a hautboy. At first I thought only of the pleasure of hearing it, persuaded that it was one of the thousand talents which Jacques possesses, and which I discover in him every day. I placed myself at the window, and, after he had finished, I said to him, bending over the balcony—“Like an angel ! There is my token, beautiful minstrel !” Then I threw upon the sanded terrace, which was lighted by the moon, a golden bracelet which I wore on my arm. Immediately a man came out of the bushes, took it up, and ran off with it ; but at the same moment I heard Jacques' voice behind me, and I stood stupified. I recounted what had just happened to me, and yet I dared not speak of the

bracelet. My mystification seemed to me so complete and so ridiculous, that I feared Sylvia's raileries, and perhaps also Jacques' reproaches; for it is he who gave me this bracelet: his cipher is engraved on it along with my own, and I am in despair at knowing it to be in the hands of a stranger. God grant that this may be a thief! I shall have committed the most perfect piece of stupidity that could have been done, in throwing my jewels at his head; but Jacques' present will go to the founders, and will not serve as a trophy for any impertinent person. I merely related that I had heard some one playing on the hautboy; that I had called to him, supposing that I was speaking to Jacques; and that I had seen a man go away, who appeared to me to be about Jacques' height, and dressed like him. Then we called to mind the adventure of my fright in the great summer-parlor. Jacques persisted in denying that he had come in, or that he had amused himself with listening to us. In this state of doubt, I did not venture to speak of the kiss which Sylvia and I had received; as for her, she is so absent, and so little susceptible of astonishment or alarm at anything, that I would bet she does not remember it: the fact is, she has said nothing about it, neither to Jacques nor to me, and that I do not know what to think of this singular and vexatious adventure. As to the bracelet, it certainly is not Jacques who has picked it up; as to the kiss, I am in doubt, for he assures me very seriously that at that moment he had not quitted the park. But it is true that he sometimes jests with an imperturbable coolness, and perhaps he is amusing himself in his own mind with my shame and my uncertainty.

While waiting to know what may be signified by these stupid jokes of our hobgoblin, I must speak to you about this everlasting affair of Sylvia's birth. Do you think she can be Jacques' sister? I sometimes think so myself; but this idea saddens me. Why, then, has Jacques made a mystery of it with me? Does he think me incapable of keeping a secret? If she were his sister, I should be more jealous

of her than if she were not: for I would bet, in that case, that he loves her more than he does me. You are much mistaken, Clémence, if you think me capable of that coarse jealousy which would lead me to fear any actual infidelity on the part of my husband: what I watch over with envy, what I question with anguish, is, his heart, his noble heart—this treasure so precious that the universe might dispute it with me, and which I dare not flatter myself that I am worthy to possess entirely to myself. Sylvia is much more reasonable, much more courageous, much more instructed, than myself: her age, her education, and her character, ally her closely to Jacques, and might establish between them a much better-founded confidence; I am a child, who knows nothing, and who can hardly comprehend. For the arts and the little sciences into which Sylvia initiates me, it seems to me that I do not lack intelligence; but when the science of the heart is in question, I no longer comprehend anything, and I do not even know that there is such a science. I understand nothing of their courage, of their principles of heroism and of stoicism. That all this may be made for them, is very possible, but why should God impose strength upon me? I have always been accustomed to the idea of obeying, and when I threw off in my own mind the barren thought of the future, I never wished for any other happiness than that of being protected, aided, and consoled, by the affection of another. It seemed to me, during the first days, that my marriage with Jacques was the most perfect realization of this dream. Whence comes it, then, that he appears sometimes to regret not having found in me his equal? Whence comes it that his protection and his kindness so often make me suffer?

Tuesday.—I know not what to think of what is passing. I would willingly believe that Sylvia, with her fantastic name, her strange character, and her inspired glance, is a sort of fairy, who draws the devil about us under different forms. Yesterday they came to tell us that a wild-boar had

come out of the woods at Réau, and was lurking in one of the coppices in our valley. This hunt alarmed me a little, not for myself, who am always surrounded and guarded like a princess, but for Jacques, who exposes himself to every danger. His prudence, his address, and his coolness, do not entirely reassure me : I therefore endeavored to divert him from his intention of attacking him ; but Sylvia jumped for joy at the idea of striking the beast, and of giving free course to her energetic humor, which has in it also, as we tell her, a little touch of ferocity.

In half an hour we were arrayed for the chase ; our horses were ready ; the huntsmen, the dogs, and the horns, were already in advance. Sylvia mounted a little Arabian horse, very mettlesome, which I had never dared to ride, and as soon as I saw how easily she made it obey her—she, who knows so much less than I of the principles of horsemanship—I was quite jealous of her, and quite inclined to pout. She amused herself in riding past me, and caricoling in narrow and dangerous places, in which the excellent limbs of her steed did miracles. I have a very handsome and very good English mare ; but I am such a coward, and require so much submission and quietness from a horse, that I was far from shining like Sylvia, and she eclipsed me before Jacques. “I bet,” said she to me, when we entered the coppice, “that at this moment you are dying to be in my place?” She could not have guessed more correctly. “Very well,” said she, “let us change horses quickly, so that Jacques may see you on his dear Chouiman, just when he least expects it.” We were alone with two servants ; Sylvia had already sprung to the ground, and was holding Chouiman by the bridle, before either of the two clodhoppers who accompanied us had thought of quitting the stirrup. At the same instant, the boar, driven from his lurking-place by the dogs, came straight toward us, and passed within three steps of me, without offering to attack any one. But the Arabian horse was frightened, reared, came near

knocking down Sylvia, who persisted in not loosing her hold on his bridle. Just then, a man, who seemed to be one of our huntsmen, for he was dressed almost exactly like them, came out from I know not where, and held in the horse, which was just about to break loose. I had no longer any desire to try him. This man assisted Sylvia to remount; but as soon as she was in the saddle, and he had given her the bridle, she gave him a cut over the fingers with her whip, saying, "*Ah! ah!*" with a certain air, that seemed to express both surprise and mockery. The unknown disappeared as he had come, amid the branches, and I inquired of Sylvia, with eager curiosity, what that meant? "Oh! nothing," replied she; "an awkward huntsman, who scratched my hand with his good offices."—"And you whip a man for that?" said I. "Why not?" she replied. Then she set off at full gallop, and I was obliged to follow her, not at all satisfied with this explanation, and, at least, very much astonished at Sylvia's conduct toward my husband's huntsman. I asked the servants the name of this man; they told me they had never seen him. The chase occupied us for several hours, and Sylvia appeared to have no thought for anything else. I watched her; for I rather suspected that this apparition might be some despairing lover. What took place on our return from the hunt, has plunged me into new uncertainties.

We returned by a cross-road, beneath the earliest rays of the moon. It was one of the most beautiful evenings we have had this year; it was rather cold, but the landscape was so finely illuminated, the air was so delightfully perfumed by the aromatic plants that grow in the brooks, the nightingale sang so sweetly, that I was really quite disposed to romantic ideas. Jacques proposed to take a road still shorter than the one which we were following. "It is somewhat difficult for the horses," said he to me, "and hitherto I have not ventured to take you by it; but since you have had, to-day, so great an accession of courage as to wish

to try Chouiman, you will certainly be brave enough to step carefully down a rather rough path."—"Certainly," said I, "since you think there is no danger." And we set out, in very picturesque order. A group of huntsmen, escorted by hounds and horns, marched in advance, carrying the boar, which was enormous. The horsemen came next, and we in the centre. We surrounded the base of the hill with a black line, whence, from time to time, a spark shone out, as the hoof of some horse struck against the rock. Behind us, another group of huntsmen and dogs followed slowly, and flourishes from the horns rang out, and answered each other from the two extremities of the caravan. When we were at the steepest part of the path, Jacques desired one of the men to take my horse by the bridle, and hold him in, while we went down the descent; then he proposed to Sylvia to have a frolic. "A frolic?" said she; "let our horses go at full speed from here to the plain?"—"Yes," said Jacques, "I will answer for Chouiman's legs, if you do not thwart him."—"Let us go!" cried the wild one; and without listening to my reproaches and my cries, they set off like the lightning down a smooth but very steep descent, which formed the base of the hill. A cold sweat stood all over me; and my heart did not beat again until I saw them arrive, without any accident, at the foot of the hill. I then perceived that the horsemen who were on before had gone faster than my horse, which was led by the hand, and that those who were behind, stupified, no doubt, at the hardihood of Jacques and Sylvia, had stopped to watch them, so that I found myself alone in the path with the man who held my bridle, at a considerable distance from both parties.

All the histories of robbers and ghosts, that have been trotting through my brain for five or six days past, came back to my mind, and this man, who was walking beside me, began to put me into a terrible fright. I looked at him attentively, and did not recognise him as one of my husband's huntsmen. On the contrary, I thought I recognised

in him the mysterious man whom Sylvia had favored, in the morning, with so pretty a rap over the knuckles. However, I had not had time to pay any great attention to his dress; and of his face, buried under a large straw hat, I had seen only a black beard, which would have seemed to me, a league off, like that of a brigand. At this moment, although he was close beside me, I could see still less of him, for he was below me, and entirely hidden from me by his hat. Nevertheless, as he was peaceable and silent, I gradually regained my courage. I do not know all the foresters and peasants, lovers of hunting, who come, with Jacques' permission, to join us, whenever they hear the sound of the horn in the valley, and whom my husband often invites, on our return, to join his huntsmen at their repast. Almost all of them are dressed in a blouse, and wear a straw hat. The fact is, I was beginning to lose my fears, and to think that Sylvia was probably capable of striking a huntsman with as little ceremony as a negro. I had the boldness, therefore, to address my guide, and to inquire of him if the road did not allow of my going alone. "Oh, not yet!" replied he. The tone of his voice, and the almost supplicating expression of his reply, sounded so little like a huntsman, that my fears again took possession of me. "If I had Sylvia's courage," thought I, "I would give this brigand a good lash with my whip, and while he rubbed his fingers in consternation, I would go on at a galloping pace, and rejoin the other huntsmen." But, besides that I should never have dared to do it, if he were really a servant I should have done the most insolent and the most singular thing in the world. In the midst of these reflections, I saw, nevertheless, that we were approaching the horsemen without any accident; and at the moment when I was about to press my horse with my heel, to disengage him from the hands of the mysterious man, he half turned toward me, and holding up his arm, he turned back the sleeve of his blouse. I then saw something shining, which I recognised as my bracelet. I had not strength

to cry out, and the unknown, loosing my bridle, remained at the side of the road, saying to me, in an under tone, these strange words: "*I hope in you.*" Then he plunged into a dense thicket, and I rode off at a gallop, more dead than alive. What torments and afflicts me the most in all this, is the sort of mystery which a fatality has established between me and this man. I now see all the inconveniences which result from the bracelet, and less than ever could I venture to speak of it to Jacques. If he should seek him, and fight him in a duel! if he should accuse me of imprudence and of lightness! I am very unhappy, for I believed certainly that I was throwing my bracelet to Jacques himself; and he who has received it, thinks me a little romantic person, easily conquered by a kiss in the dark and an air on the hautboy. I am sorry now that I did not speak to him, in order to explain my mistake, and demand of him to give me back my bracelet; perhaps he would have returned it to me. But I lost my wits, as I always do on those occasions when a little coolness is necessary. I have tried to learn what Sylvia thinks of this man. She declares that I am crazy, and that there is no other *man* in the valley beside Jacques. He whom the gardener saw, was, according to her, some thief who was stealing fruit; he who played on the hautboy, a wandering comedian, or perhaps a travelling clerk, who was going to sleep at the village inn, and amused himself by clearing the moat that surrounds the garden, in order to boast, in some alehouse, of having met with a romantic adventure during his journey.

As to the man who was struck with the whip, she persists in saying that it was only a peasant; and I dare not speak of the man with the bracelet, for the idea that a travelling clerk, or a wandering musician, can flatter himself with having received this token of my good-will, causes me an extreme mortification. In fact, as to that, Sylvia's explanation appears to me sufficiently admissible; and if I did not fear lest it might cause some misfortune, I would confide

everything to Jacques, and he would go and chastise this impertinent person as he deserves. But this man may be brave, and an expert duellist. The idea of implicating Jacques in an affair of this kind, makes my hair stand on end. I will be silent.

XXXIX.

Octave to Herbert.

You have often told me that I am mad, my dear Herbert, and I begin to believe it. It is very certain that I am well contented to be so, for were it not so, I should be very unhappy. If you wish to know where I am, and how I am occupied, I shall have some difficulty in answering you.

I am in a country in which I have never before set my foot, with which I am not acquainted, and in which I dare not move, except under a disguise. As to my occupations, they consist in rambling round an old mansion, playing on the hautboy by the light of the moon, and receiving, now and then, a rap across my fingers from a riding-whip. You could not have been much surprised at my abrupt departure, when you learned that Sylvia had quitted Geneva a month before. You will have supposed that I went to rejoin her, and you will not have been mistaken. But what you certainly will not have supposed, is, that without invitation, and even without permission, I have set out to follow her footsteps. She left her hermitage at Léman, with the strangeness that characterizes all her resolutions, and in consequence of one of those spontaneous ideas that come to her at the moment when one imagines oneself the most tranquil and the most happy of men at her feet. Strange creature! too passionate or too cold for love, I know not which, but most assuredly too beautiful and too superior to her sex

to pass before the eyes of a man, without driving him somewhat crazy. I knew that M. Jacques was married, and I thought it very likely that she had gone to install herself with him; for, during the last several months, she had announced this project to me, whenever she was a little out of humor, and wanted to drive me to despair. But I did not know whether M. Jacques was at present in Touraine or in Dauphiny; for, in the haughty note which Sylvia had left for me at the hermitage, she had not deigned to tell me whither she had turned her steps; it was then, absolutely at random, that I came here. I am installed in the cabin of an old gamekeeper, avaricious and saturnine, whom I chose for my host on account of his evil looks, and who, for money, would aid me to assassinate all the men, and carry off all the women, in the country. It is, then, in the midst of the woods that your conjectures must seek me; in the most romantic valley in the world, protected by the disguise of a poaching forester, rather than clothed as an honest man; poaching, in fact, under the protection of my host, and preparing with him, in the evening, the supper which we have conquered, arms in hand; sleeping on a truckle-bed; reading a few chapters of romance beneath the shade of the great forest oaks; hazarding sentimental and mysterious excursions round the dwelling of my inhuman mistress—neither more nor less than a second Lovelace—and writing to you upon my knee, by the light of a pine torch. The most ridiculous thing about all this is, that I do it in serious earnest, and that I am really sad and amorous as a ringdove. This Sylvia is the despair of my life, and I would give one of my arms never to have known her. You know enough of her to conceive how much a man, as little of a charlatan as myself, must suffer from her romantic caprices, and the superb disdain with which she regards all that wanders out of the region of that ideal world within which she encloses herself. There is, indeed, in my unhappiness, something of my own fault. I deceived her, or rather, I deceived my-

self, in leading her to think that I was a wanderer from that world, and that I felt myself capable of returning thither. Yes, in fact, I really imagined it to be so; and during the first days, I was altogether the man whom she would, or whom she could, love. But, by degrees, the indolence and the levity of my character regained the ascendancy; I listened again to the voice of reason, and Sylvia appeared to me as, in fact, she is, enthusiastic, exaggerated, and a little crazed.

But this discovery was not sufficient to prevent me from loving her passionately. Exaggeration, which makes the young girls of the provinces so ridiculous, made Sylvia so beautiful, so striking, so inspired, that it constitutes, perhaps, her greatest charm, and her most powerful seduction. But Heaven seems to have bestowed this quality upon her for her own misfortune, and that of her lovers, for she can make herself admired, but can not persuade. Proud, even to madness, she chooses to act as if we were still living in the times of the golden age, and pretends that all those who dare to suspect her are cowards or wicked. From the moment when I saw, with uneasiness, the singularity of her conduct, and felt jealous on account of the freedom of her proceedings, I lost my place in her regard; and, precipitated from that celestial region in which she had seated me beside herself, I fell into the muddy world of common mortals, in which this fair sylph has never deigned to set her ivory foot. From that moment, our love has been a succession of ruptures and reconciliations. I remember that you said to me, one day, when I was recounting to you, with grief, one of these quarrels, after the reconciliation, "Of what do you complain?" Ah, my friend! you may understand women, but you do not understand Sylvia. With her, the least mistake is of the most terrible importance, and each new fault digs a grave in which a portion of her love is buried. She pardons, it is true; but this pardon is worse than her anger. Anger is violent, and full of emotion. Sylvia's forgiveness is cold and inexorable as death. A prey to a thousand sus-

pitions, tormented, uncertain, sometimes fearing to be the dupe of the most arrant coquette, sometimes fearing to have outraged the purest of women, I have lived unhappy with her, but have never had the strength to detach myself from her. Twenty times has she driven me from her, and twenty times have I returned to her, to pray for mercy, after having tried, in vain, to live without her. During the first days of my banishment, I have hoped to be able to applaud myself for having recovered my liberty and my repose, and have abandoned myself, delighted, to the comforts of indifference and forgetfulness. But weariness made me very soon regret the agitations and the noble sufferings of passion. I looked about me, to seek some other love, but the indolence of my mind, and the activity of my temperament, conspired equally to remove me from other women. Hunting, fishing, all the energetic pleasures of the country, which Sylvia had shared with me, all these my temperament led me to prefer to their society. My spirit shrank from beginning another apprenticeship, and attempting a new conquest. And then, what woman can be compared with Sylvia, for beauty, intelligence, sensibility, and nobleness of the heart? Yes, when I have lost her, I do her justice; I am astonished and indignant at myself for having been able to suspect a woman so truly great, and whose lofty conduct proves to me how utterly incapable she is of descending to falsehood. But when I am again with her, I suffer from her resolute and inflexible disposition, from her violent temper, from her intolerant mysticism, and from her singular exactions. She yields to none of my imperfections, she pardons none of my defects; she draws arguments from them all, to show me how superior her soul is to mine; and nothing is more fatal to love than this mutual examination of two proud and jealous hearts, each determined to surpass the other.

Mine very soon grow weary of this strife, I should have preferred a love less difficult and less sublime. Sylvia overwhelmed me with her disdain, and would sometimes

prove to me the poverty of my heart, with so much warmth of eloquence, that I began to be convinced that I was not born to love; and even now I hardly dare persuade myself that I am worthy of knowing it. But, if it be so, why was I born? and to what has God destined me in this world? I do not see toward what my vocation draws me. I have no violent passion; I am neither a gamester, a libertine, nor a poet; I love the arts, and I understand them sufficiently to find in them recreation and amusement; but I could not make of them a predominant occupation. I soon become weary of society; I feel the need of having some end, and no other end seems desirable to me than that of loving and being loved. Perhaps I should be happier and wiser if I had a profession; but my modest fortune, which no disorders have impaired, leaves me free to abandon myself to this idle and easy life to which I have accustomed myself. To confine myself now to any labor whatsoever would be odious to me. I love the life of the fields, but not without a companion who would enable me to taste the pleasures of the mind and of the heart, in the bosom of that material life in which the dread of solitude would soon overtake me. Perhaps I am fitted for marriage. I love children; I am kind, and regular in my habits. I think I should make a very honest citizen in some second-rate city in our peaceful Westphalia. I might make myself esteemed as a cultivator, and father of a family; but I should wish my wife to be rather more erudite than those who knit a blue-socking from morning to night. And for myself, I should fear lest I might grow stupid, reading my newspaper and smoking my pipe in the midst of my worthy fellow-citizens and their pots of beer, the former almost as simple and inoffensive as the latter. In fine, I should have to find a woman inferior to Sylvia, but superior to all those whom I could obtain, as far as my acquaintance goes. But above all, I should have to get cured of the love which I have for Sylvia, and this is a malady from which my soul is, as yet, very far from being delivered.

Not knowing what to do, I have come here to essay once more my destiny. At first it was my intention to throw myself at her feet, as usual ; and then I took a fancy to watch her a while, to consult the opinion of those who are about her—in fine, to learn something about her, and to see her without her having any idea of it, in order to banish from my mind, once for all, the suspicions which have tormented me so often, and which will perhaps torment me again, for Sylvia has an extraordinary talent for giving them birth, a profound contempt for the easiest explanations, and I have a poor head which quickly creates for itself the most cruel torments. I have not been able to obtain anything of the intelligence which I sought : for my empress Sylvia has been here only three weeks, and no one in this place has ever heard her spoken of. If she knew that these thoughts had passed through my mind, she would never forgive me ; but she will be all the less likely to know it, inasmuch as the course of my observations is almost terminated. Yesterday she recognised me through my disguise, and received me in a very impertinent manner. I shall therefore be obliged to show myself. Jacques knows me, and would soon discover me. They would perhaps laugh together at my expense, if I myself did not take the part of going to laugh along with them.

This Jacques is certainly a fine man, but one with whom his coldness of character and reserve of manners have never allowed me to be on very familiar terms, and against whom, moreover, I have felt terrible sensations of jealousy. I now have reason to know that I have been unjust and gross in my suspicions. But I owe him a grudge for having shared in the superb pride with which Sylvia for a long time refused to reassure me, by explaining to me their consanguinity and the nature of their relations to each other. I owe him a grudge, also, for being Sylvia's type of all that is grandest and most beautiful in the world ; the only soul worthy to fly on the same level with her own through the fields of the

empyrean ; in a word, the object of a Platonic love, and of a romantic worship, of which I am not jealous, but which causes me no small mortification. I shall be none the less the friend and servant of M. Jacques upon all occasions ; but if, before shaking hands with him, I could pay him back a little, and revenge myself upon Sylvia by showing myself smitten with another, I should be very much diverted.

In order to explain to you this new freak, you must know that M. Jacques has the prettiest, rosiest little jewel of a wife that you can imagine ! Less beautiful than Sylvia, she is certainly much more ladylike ; and assuredly her soul, romantic in its own way, is less lofty and less cruel. As a token to this effect, I have a bracelet which was thrown to me from a window with very gentle words one evening when I supposed myself to be addressing to my tigress the passionate accents of my hautboy. I am far from being coxcomb enough to be particularly vain of this, for I do not know whether she has yet seen my face, and on that evening she had not even seen my shadow ; it was therefore to the sound of the hautboy, to the intoxication of a spring evening, and to some holyday dream of her schoolgirl days, that she vouchsafed this pledge of protection. I am too honest a man, and too unskilful a hero of romance, to take any serious advantage of this little piece of coquetry. But it is quite permissible for me to carry on this romance a few days longer. I commenced by a kiss, which perhaps may have left some emotion in the heart of the fair Fernande, when she learned that she had been embraced in the dark, along with Sylvia, by some other than her husband. Do you not think that I have become quite a rascal through spite, I who am so little such by nature ? That evening, in truth, my thoughts were entirely occupied with Sylvia. I entered by one of the glass doors of the saloon which open upon the thickets that skirt the garden, with the intention of going openly to Sylvia to ask forgiveness for all the faults of which I had or had not been guilty. They were playing

on the piano ; it was dusk : they did not perceive the presence of a third person. I seated myself upon the sofa. One of them came and placed herself beside me without seeing me. I was about to seize her in my arms, when I heard Sylvia's voice at the piano. I overheard a little sentimental conversation which they had together ; and, at the moment when they discovered me, I embraced Sylvia, and was just going to speak, when Fernande, taking me for her husband, and hearing me kiss her companion, put her face up to mine with a little air of childish jealousy which I defy you to have resisted. I know not how it was—in the dark—my lips met hers. My faith ! I was so much troubled at this adventure, that I fled without letting them know that I was not Jacques. Since that time, I know through my old host, who is the uncle of Rosette, the waiting-maid of these ladies, that the lovely Fernande has panic terrors, and does not hear a leaf fall in the park, or a mouse move in the house, without being ready to faint. Nothing is more favorable for a mysterious gallant than the terrors and faintings of his lady. Happily for Fernande, I am neither audacious, nor in love to such a degree.

But these adventures amuse and occupy me. I am twenty-four, and this is very allowable. The fine weather, the moonlight, this wild and picturesque valley, these great woods full of shade and of mystery : this venerable-looking mansion, gravely seated on the gentle slope of a hill ; these huntsmen, that scour the valley, and make it echo to the howlings of dogs and the sound of horns ; these two huntresses, more beautiful than all the nymphs of Diana—the one dark, tall, proud, and audacious—the other fair, timid, and sentimental—both mounted on superb horses, and galloping noiselessly over the woodland moss : all this is like a dream, and I do not wish to wake.

XL.

Gernande to Clemence.

Tuesday.—This affair is becoming complicated, and begins to cause me considerable trouble and chagrin. I have done very wrong in hiding all this from Jacques; but now every day of silence increases my fault, and I really fear his reproaches and his anger. Jacques' anger! I know not what it is, and I can not believe that he will ever let me know it: and yet how can a husband remain tranquil when he learns that his wife has received a declaration of love from another man?

Yes, Clémence, behold whither this fatal mistake of the bracelet has brought me. Yesterday evening I was in my chamber with my children and Rosette; my daughter seemed to be in pain, and could not sleep. I told Rosette to take away the light, which perhaps might be troubling her. I had been some time in the dark, with my little one on my knees, and I tried to quiet her by singing: but she cried all the louder, and I was beginning to be really uneasy about her, when I heard the sound of the hautboy at the other end of the apartment, like the tones of a sweet and plaintive voice. The child became silent immediately, and listened as though quite ravished by the sound. As for me, I held my breath: surprise and fear rendered me altogether incapable of moving. The unknown was in my chamber, alone with me! I dared not call out, I dared not run away. Rosette came in just after the hautboy had ceased, and was astonished to see the little one silent and quieted. "Go and get a light, quick, quick!" said I; "I am in a terrible

fear! Why did you leave me alone?"—"I shall have to leave madame alone again," replied she, "while I go down stairs for a light."—"Ah! mon Dieu! why is there no light in your room?" I answered. "No! do not go—do not leave me alone! Did you hear nothing, Rosette? Are you sure there is no one in the room with us?"—"I see no one but madame, the children, and myself, and I heard nothing but the flute."—"Who was playing the flute?"—"I do not know; monsieur, apparently: who else in the house knows how to play it?"—"Is it you who are there, Jacques?" cried I; "if it be you, do not amuse yourself with frightening me, for I am dying with fear!" I knew well that it was not Jacques; but I spoke thus, in order to force my persecutor to explain himself, or to go away. No one answered. Rosette opened the curtains, and, by the light of the moon, examined every corner of the apartment, without discovering any one. She doubtless thought my fears very ridiculous, and I was ashamed of them myself. I told her to go and get a light, and when she was gone out, I went and bolted the door behind her. But this was quite useless, for the unknown entered by the window. I know not how he got in—whether, from the upper gallery, he had the audacity to venture down by my window-shutters; or whether, by the help of a ladder, he got up from below—the fact is, that he entered as quietly as though he came in from the street. Anger gave me strength, and I sprang to my children's cradle, screaming for help. But he knelt down in the middle of the floor, saying to me in a gentle voice, "How is it possible for you to be afraid of a man who would gladly prove his devotion by dying for you?"—"I know not who you are, monsieur," I replied in a trembling voice; "but, assuredly, you are very insolent to enter my chamber thus. Go, go! and let me never see you again, or I will inform my husband of your conduct."—"No," said he, coming nearer to me, "you will not do it: you will pity a man who is in despair!" At this moment I saw the bracelet, and it occurred to me to

demand of him to give it back to me. I did so in a tone of authority, declaring to him that I had supposed I was throwing it to my husband. "I am ready to obey you in everything," said he, with a resigned air; "take it back, but know that you take from me the sole happiness, the sole hope of my life." Then he knelt down again close beside me, and held out his arm to me. I did not dare to take the bracelet myself: I must have touched his hand, or at least his dress, and I did not think it proper to do so. Then he seemed to think that I hesitated, for he said to me, "You pity me, you consent to leave it with me: is it not so? O my dear Fernande!"—and he seized my hand, which he kissed several times very insolently. I began to scream, and steps were immediately heard in the gallery adjoining; but before they had time to enter, the unknown had disappeared, like a cat, by the window.

Jacques and Sylvia were now knocking at the door, which I had bolted, and which I did not think of opening, while screaming to them in the name of Heaven to come in. This circumstance of the bolt, which was fatally connected with the entrance of a man into my chamber, prevented me from relating what had passed: I said that I had heard the hautboy; that I had sent Rosette to get lights, and that she had fastened me in by mistake; that I had fancied I heard a noise in the room, and had lost my senses. As they think me crazy with fear, they asked me nothing more about it. Rosette certified that she had heard the hautboy while crossing the gallery. They searched the house and the gardens: they found no one; and declared laughingly that I should have a corps of men-at-arms to guard me. Sylvia brought Jacques' Turkish cloak and cap; she muffled herself in these, put on some false mustaches, and planted herself behind me, sabre in hand, affecting to follow me about the room as an escort. She looked as handsome as an angel in this costume. We laughed until midnight, and the rest of the night passed very quietly. But my mind is extreme-

ly agitated! I feel that I am engaged in a foolish and imprudent adventure, which may perhaps lead to fatal consequences. Heaven grant that they may all fall upon me only!

Thursday.—I have just received the following note, which was given to Rosette by her uncle, the game-keeper: “Lovely and gentle Fernande, be not angry with me, do not mistake the motives which have prompted my conduct. You can save me from eternal unhappiness, and make me the happiest of friends and of lovers. I love Sylvia; I have been loved by her. I know not by what irreparable crime I have lost her confidence and incurred her displeasure. I will renounce her only with life; and *I hope in you*, in you only. You have a loving and generous soul, I know it; I know you better than you think. The bracelet which you supposed you were throwing to your husband, and which I will return to you, if you will not accord it to the sacred friendship of a brother, is, in my eyes, a gage of confidence and salvation. Forgive me for having alarmed you; I hoped to be able to speak with you in secret; I see that this will be impossible, unless you yourself grant me that favor; and you will grant it, will you not, beautiful, fair-haired angel? Your mission upon earth is to console the unfortunate. I will await you this evening at the great elm, where the four ways meet, at the entrance of the Val-Brun. Be accompanied, if you will, by some trusty person, but let it not be your husband. He knows me, and I flatter myself that I possess his esteem and his friendship; but, at this moment, he is opposed to me; and if you do not labor for my justification, I have no hope of being again received into favor. If you do not come, I will leave the bracelet under the stone beneath the great elm. You will send and have it taken thence; but it will be stained with the blood of

“OCTAVE.”

What do you think of this? what shall I do? But what is the use of asking you? you can not answer me under eight days, and I must decide upon my course before this evening. To grant a meeting to this young man, above all, when I know that Jacques is not in his interests, in order to reconcile him to Sylvia, is, perhaps, a great imprudence, according to the world; nevertheless, according to my conscience, I can not see any harm in it. If there be any danger, it can only be for me, who run the risk of displeasing Jacques, and of incurring his reproaches, while I may render, if I succeed, a service to Sylvia and to Octave, and may, perhaps, insure the happiness of their whole life; for there is no happiness without love. Sylvia tries in vain to hide her grief. I see now why her thoughts are so dark, why her future seems so gloomy to her eyes. If she has been able to love this young man, he must be above the common, and must have a beautiful soul; for Sylvia is very exacting in her affections, and too proud ever to have attached herself to a being who was not worthy of them. I now see clearly that she recognised her lover in the huntsman whom she punished so thoroughly for his desire to be officious with her; and I also see in this blow with the whip, accompanied by so complete a silence as to her discovery, more of spiteful mockery, than of real anger. I bet that she is dying to have some one bring her friend to her feet; it is impossible for it to be otherwise. This Octave loves her to distraction, since he does such extraordinary things to recover her. He has a charming face, at least so it seemed to me when I saw him in my chamber by the moonlight. Jacques is severe and inexorable; he treats Sylvia too much as a man; he does not divine the weaknesses of a woman's heart, and does not comprehend, as I do, what weariness and suffering must be hidden beneath this courage. If I refuse to aid in bringing about this reconciliation, her happiness is, perhaps, at an end for

ever; perhaps she will condemn herself to an eternal solitude; and this young man, what if he should really kill himself! I should think him quite capable of doing so; he seems really in love. What is to be done? I dare not decide upon anything. Happily I shall have time to think about it from now until the evening.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

JACQUES.

BY

GEORGE SAND,

AUTHOR OF CONSUELO, LA COMTESSE DE RUDOLSTADT, ETC., ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY ANNA BLACKWELL.

IN TWO VOLUMES,

VOL. II.

SECOND EDITION.

NEW YORK:

J. S. REDFIELD, CLINTON HALL.

1847.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1846,
By ANNA BLACKWELL,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for
the Southern District of New York.

JACQUES.

XLI.

Octave to Herbert.

My friend, I have hastened to place my affairs upon a proper footing, for truly they were becoming confused. Fernande took my pleasantries quite seriously, and it was time to undeceive her; otherwise I ran the risk of being discovered and turned over by her to her husband, or of being forced to pay my court to her in earnest. I did not wish to be driven to either of these alternatives. Perhaps with a woman of this character, fearful, nervous, and always in a paroxysm of emotion of some kind or other, it might have been easy for me, aided by the romance of circumstances, to turn things to my own profit, and to make considerable progress in a short time. Women like Sylvia give themselves through love; but, either I am much mistaken, or those like Fernande allow themselves to be caught without knowing why, although sure to be in despair the next day. I do not think that Lovelace, in my place, would have acted as virtuously as I; but I have not the honor to be M. Lovelace, and I act in my own way, which is not at all that of a scoundrel. To surprise the senses of a young woman for whom I have no love, and to give her over to shame and

anger, by addressing myself the next day under her very eyes to another — this would have been not only the part of a coward, but also of a fool. For assuredly, after having played such a part toward these two women, I should have been driven off and detested by them both ; and I do not think that the remembrance of having held Fernande for an hour in my arms, would be worth the happiness of being only seated for a year beside Sylvia.

I have therefore cut short this intrigue, which was taking too foolish a turn ; but being too much of a fool myself to be able to resolve upon entirely destroying my romance in one day, I took Fernande for a confidant and protectress. I wrote her a very sentimental note, in which, with a little flattery, a little exaggeration, and a little falsehood, I persuaded her to grant me an interview, in order to consult upon the great affair of my reconciliation with Sylvia. I have arranged my plan so as to prolong, as far as possible, the mysterious but innocent communication which I have established with my fair advocate. I shall have, then, for a few days longer, moonlight, signals on the hautboy, promenades upon the moss, white robes gleaming through trees, notes under the stone at the great elm—in a word, all that is most charming in a passion, the accessories. I am very childish, am I not ? Well, yes ! and I am not at all ashamed of it. I have so long been sad and weary !

XLII.

JEROME to CLEMENTE.

WELL ! I decided to go and console this unfortunate lover. You will say what you please, but it seems to me I have done well, for I feel my heart happy and softened. I took Rosette with me, after having strictly enjoined upon her to keep the secret (she had already been taken into confidence), and we went together to the great elm. The poor desolate-hearted one came to me with transports of joy and of gratitude. This Octave is a very good young man, and I am now sure that he is worthy of Sylvia. He recounted to me all his troubles, and depicted to me Sylvia's character and his own in such a way as to shew me how it had happened that they often offended each other without any apparent reason. Do you know that this recital made a singular impression upon me, and that in it I seemed to read the history of my own heart through the last year ? Poor Octave ! I pity him more than he can imagine ; I understand the unhappiness from which he suffers ; and I hardly know whether I ought not to counsel him to forget his love for ever, and to seek some soul more like his own. Yes, it is the same suffering, the same destiny, as my own ! A young head, confiding, and without experience, like mine, contending with a character proud, obstinate, and grave, like that of Jacques. Now that he has made me comprehend Sylvia, I see clearly that she is my husband's sister. If she be only his pupil, it is certain that he has well taught, and faithfully transmitted to her, his manner of loving. Why are they not married ? They would be on the same level.

This reconciliation will not be an easy thing : I know not even if it be possible. We have decided upon nothing,

Octave and I, in this first interview : I could only stay an hour, and it was entirely employed in informing me exactly of their respective position. He promised that on the morrow he would tell me what must be done ; I shall return there, then, this evening. It is very easy for me to absent myself for an hour, without any one in the house perceiving it. Jacques and Sylvia are not sorry to find themselves alone, to discourse together upon their gloomy philosophy ; they do not pay any great attention to what I may be doing during this time. God knows, moreover, whether Jacques loves me well enough at present to be jealous of me !

Ah ! how the times are changed, my poor friend ! It is true that we are happy now, if happiness is to be found in tranquillity and the absence of reproaches ; but how different from the first days of our love ! Then there was in us an ever-lively joy—a continual transport—and our souls, though filled with passion, were none the less calm and serene. Who has destroyed this repose ? who has robbed us of this happiness ? I can not believe that it is I alone. It has been partly my fault, it is true ; but with a being more imperfect and more indulgent than Jacques, instead of relaxing our bonds, these first sorrows would perhaps have drawn them all the closer. Why is it that Octave, notwithstanding all the harshness and the strange caprices of Sylvia, loves her better every day, in proportion to the evils he endures for her sake ? Why is it that Jacques can not become a child with me, as Octave becomes the slave and the patient victim with Sylvia ? At present Jacques seems contented, because my children divert my thoughts from him, and Sylvia diverts his thoughts from me ; he is not jealous of my children, and I—I am jealous of his sister. There is no longer the appearance between us of anything more than friendship ; he does not suffer on account of this, and I pass whole nights in weeping for our lost love.

This Sylvia, with her soul of bronze, is she a woman ?

Ought not Jacques to prefer her who would die at losing him, to her who is always prepared for all misfortunes, and always sure of being able to console herself for everything? But in this world one loves only one's like. How comes it, then, that I still love Jacques? All his strength, all his greatness, do not serve to make his love as solid and as generous as mine. Sylvia concerns herself no more about Octave than as though he had never existed; yet she knows that he is here, and that he has come here only for her sake. She sleeps, she sings, she reads, she talks with Jacques about the stars and the moon, and does not deign to throw upon the earth one glance for the devoted lover who weeps at her feet. Yet Octave is worthy of a better fate and of a more tender love. He has so gentle an eloquence, so pure a heart, so interesting a face! I hardly know him, and yet I feel a friendship for him, so much has he interested me in his fate, and so ingenuously has he shown me the depths of his soul. How much do I desire to be able to reconcile him to Sylvia, and see him fixed near us! What an amiable friend would he be for me! What a sweet life we four would lead together! I will give all my cares to the realization of this beautiful dream; it will be a good action, and God will perhaps bless my love, for having rekindled that of Octave and of Sylvia.

XLIII.

Octave to *Fernande*.

You have left me, this evening, so consoled, so happy, O my lovely friend ! O my dear guardian angel ! that I feel the need, in returning beneath my roof of ferns, of thanking you, and of telling you all the hope and gratitude that you have awakened in my heart. Yes, you will succeed ! you have said that you desire it strongly ; you will fall upon your knees beside me, if it be necessary, to implore the proud Sylvia, and you will vanquish her pride. May God hear you ! How well I did to address myself to you, and to hope in your kindness ! Your exterior did not deceive me : you are indeed the angelic being announced by your large blue eyes and your sweet smile, that charming figure, gracefully curved like a delicate flower, and that fair hair, tinted with the sun's most beautiful ray. When I saw you for the first time, I was hidden in the park, and you passed me reading. At the first glance, seeing a woman, I thought you were her whom I sought. Ah ! you were really her whom I then needed, and whom God in his mercy had sent to me. I hid myself amid the foliage, and watched you, as you passed slowly by. You held the book carefully, but from time to time you raised toward the horizon a melancholy and abstracted glance ; you also seemed not to be happy ; and if I must tell you all, Fernande, it still seems to me that you are not as happy as you deserve to be. When I recount to you my sufferings, they seem to find an echo in your heart ; and when I tell you that love is the first of evils more often than the first of blessings, you answer me, " Oh ! yes," with an accent of inexpressible sadness. Oh ! my kind Fernande, if you need a friend, a brother, if I can be so happy as to ren-

der you any service, or at least to lighten your sorrows by weeping with you, initiate me into these holy tears, and may God aid me to repay to you the good which you have done me. From the first day in which I saw you, I have found again the courage to live despairing. I was about to make a last effort, resolved to die if it failed. In the evening I entered the saloon, and I heard your conversation with Sylvia. There I learned all your soul : it was revealed to me in a few words : you spoke of unhappy love ; you spoke of dying. You could not conceive of that solitary future which your friend contemplated without terror. " Oh ! this is my sister," said I to myself, in listening to you ; " she thinks, like me, that one must be loved or die ; her heart is a refuge that I would implore ; there, at least, I shall find compassion, and if she can not succor me, she will compassionate me ; her pity will descend from heaven, like manna, and I will receive it on my knees." If I am driven from here, if I must renounce Sylvia, I will carry away with me in my heart the sacred remembrance of this holy friendship ; I will invoke it in my sufferings. O Fernande ! why is Sylvia so different from you ? Can you not soften her indomitable soul ? Can you not communicate to her this sweetness and this tenderness that are in you ? Tell her how to love, teach her how to forgive ; teach her, above all, that to forgive a fault in another is more sublime than to be faultless oneself ; and that in order to be really my superior, she should have forgiven me. Her resentment makes her more criminal before God than all my faults. The perfection which she seeks and of which she dreams, exists only in heaven ; but it is the recompense of those who have practised mercy upon earth.

I shall be near the house this evening. The moon does not rise until ten o'clock. If you have obtained any success, place yourself at the window and sing a few words in Italian : if you sing in French, I shall understand that you have nothing favorable to tell me. But then I shall have

only the more need of seeing you, Fernande ; come to the place of meeting at eleven. Have pity on your friend, your brother,

OCTAVE.

XLIV.

Fernande to Octave.

I TOLD you yesterday evening how little success I had met with ; I have still less hope to-day. However, let us not be discouraged, my poor Octave, and be sure that I will not abandon you. The frightful weather we have to-day deprives me of the hope of seeing you this evening ; I also therefore take the part of writing to you, and of intrusting my letter to Rosette, who will put it under the stone at the great elm. I have tried to speak of you to Sylvia, but her reserved and inflexible temper has resisted all the investigations of my friendship. In vain have I assailed her with questions, the most adroit and at the same time the most prudent that I could possibly imagine : I was not even able to obtain the avowal that she had ever loved. Do you see, Octave, I am treated here like a child of four ; my husband and Sylvia imagine that I am not in a state to comprehend their sentiments and their thoughts. They have both taken refuge in a world which they believe accessible only to themselves ; they pitilessly close the entrance against me, and I live alone between two beings who cherish me, and who know not how to testify it to me ! I confessed it to you last evening, I am not happy ; I did wrong, perhaps, to give you this confidence ; but you pressed me with questions so affectionate, and with reproaches so gentle, that I should have feared to be unjust to your friendship had I refused to you the confidence you accord to me. You have related to

me all your sufferings : I was so much moved yesterday, I could hardly make you understand my own. But it is very easy for you to understand them, Octave : for they are absolutely the same as yours, and whoever has endured your life for three years, has also endured that which I have suffered the last year. You are right, then, in calling me your sister. We are brothers in misfortune, and our destinies have been mingled in the same cup of bitterness and tears ; we are both crushed and misunderstood. Jacques is Sylvia's brother : do not doubt it ; he has all her character, all her pride, all her inexorable silence. For myself, I have many other faults than those of which you accuse me ; we strike against each other, we often wound each other, then, without any apparent cause ; a word, a question, a look, are sufficient to sadden me for a whole day ; and yet Jacques is an angel : and, from what you have told me of Sylvia, I see that she is far from possessing his gentleness and his kindness in forgiving. But if Jacques' temper be different from hers, the foundation of their character is the same : it is the difference in our sex and in our situation that causes us to be differently treated. Jacques can not ill-treat and banish me as Sylvia does you, but in his soul he removes himself further from me every day, and says to himself in a whisper, what Sylvia says aloud to you : " We are not made for each other."

Dreadful words—perhaps inexorable doom ! Ah ! what have we done to merit it ? I can not conceive that one can help loving the being by whom one is beloved, for the sole reason that he loves. Is it not the best of all reasons ? is it not the merit which ought to insure pardon for everything ? Is not the whole of expiation contained in the simple words, " I love thee" ? Jacques has often said this to me, and with what transport do I seize upon them ! When I have imagined, for days together, that he has been very cruel and very culpable toward me, if he comes back to me with these sweet and holy words, I ask of him no other justification : it

effaces from my sight all wrongs and all sorrows ; why has it not for him the same value from my mouth ? Ah ! Octave, they think they know how to love, those two !

Well ! let us have courage, let us love them sadly and patiently ; perhaps they will become just in seeing us resigned, perhaps they will become generous in seeing us suffer ; let us take each other by the hand, and walk together through the valley of tears. If my friendship aids and consoles you, be assured that yours is very sweet to me : would that I could give you happiness ! But shall I succeed ? can one give what one has not ?

It is necessary to decide upon speaking to Jacques ; but the oftener I go to him, the less do I flatter myself that this message will be welcome coming through my mouth. For two or three days he has been inconceivably cold and abstracted toward me. Sylvia loads me with kindnesses, and cares, and caresses ; but when I begin to talk with her about anything besides botany and music, I only meet with skilful defeats intended to remove my solicitude. She is, like Jacques, kind, affectionate, and devoted ; like him, distrustful and incomprehensible. Try to make up your mind to write, either to her or to my husband ; I will take charge of your letter ; I will say that I have seen you : I shall then have the right to speak of you, and to undertake your defence. But if you still refuse to let me say that you are here, what do you suppose I can obtain from people who affect not to know even your name ? It will be necessary, if you take the advice which I give you, to hide a little of our mutual friendship from Jacques, and to tell him that you met and accosted me in the park the same day that I speak of you. This will be the first falsehood I shall have told in my life, but it seems to me necessary. If we appear to be leagued together to vanquish their pride, they will league together to keep on the watch : they will talk of us together, and if, some day, in their sombre philosophy, they happen to draw a parallel between us, we shall be lost. Whichever

of us is not quite precipitated, will fall into the abyss with the other. Adieu, Octave ; I am as sad to-day as the weather, and I feel a sort of inexplicable terror ; I fear lest you should bring to me some unhappiness, or lest I should complete your ruin in trying to save you.

Forgive me for having no more courage, when you have so much need of hope and consolation ; perhaps to-morrow will be a better day for us both.

Remember, then, my friend, to bring me back my bracelet the first time we meet. I shall pray that it may cease raining ; I will put a light in the window this evening, if I can not go out.

XLV.

Clemence to Fernande.

FERNANDE ! Fernande ! you are lost, and really it is too soon ; you pain me. I knew well that this must happen to you some day : with your weakness of character, and the absence of sympathy which exists between your husband and yourself, this has always seemed to me inevitable ; but I hoped that you would longer resist your destiny, and that you would maintain against it a nobler and more courageous struggle. This is being vanquished too quickly. My poor Fernande, you are at an age when one does not even know how to make the best of one's evil fate, and conduct an affair of the heart at least with prudence. You will compromise yourself, allow yourself to be discovered by your husband ; demand his forgiveness : obtain it ; deceive him again ; and, little by little, become his enemy or his slave. Fernande, is it possible that you have not been able to wait two or three years ?

I know that you are pure as yet, and that, before committing your first fault, you will shed many useless tears, and address to all the protecting angels many wasted prayers ; but the evil is already done, and the sin committed in your heart. You love—it is useless to deny it, my friend—you love another man than your husband. You did not yet know it when you wrote to me ; otherwise you would not have written me of what is going on ; but it is as clear to me as the past and the future of my poor Fernande. This Octave is young ; you have remarked that he has a charming face ; he comes in at your window ; he plays on the hautboy, and puts your children to sleep as if by magic ; he plays off a romance round you, and behold, you are troubled, confused, moved, that is to say, smitten. You might very well in the beginning have recounted to your husband the imperinences of M. Octave, and have cut them short without meriting the slightest reproach from M. Jacques. But this would have been to finish too quickly an adventure which charms and amuses you much more than it alarms you ; for you are ready to faint with terror every time the goblin appears, and yet you always manage in such a way as to evoke him from the darkness.

At length the enemy changes his batteries, and, in order to approach you, speaks to you of a love which he perhaps has never had for Sylvia, and which is very certainly only a pretext for getting at you. You accept this pretext with eagerness, and, without conceiving the least suspicion as to its sincerity, you run to the rendezvous, and behold ! you are engaged in an intrigue which will have the usual results, a few pleasures and many tears.

It is very true that, in order to exculpate yourself in your own eyes from the new love which you feel fermenting within you, you recapitulate your husband's wrongs toward you, and exert yourself to prove that it has needed a great deal of courage and a great deal of devotion on your part to have loved him until now. But all this theory of love and of

infidelity is founded on false principles. In the first place, you have never had any true love for M. Jacques; in the next place, there has been nothing in his conduct to authorize the faults you are about to commit. From everything that you have told me of him, I see that he is one of the best men in the world, and that he is guilty of nothing but of being double your age. Why do you charge him with anything more serious? Why do you accuse his temper and his heart? Fernande, this is unjust and ungrateful. It is enough to deceive your husband; you need not calumniate him. Confess that you are young, giddy; that your principles have little solidity, and your character no energy; that you feel the need of loving, and that you abandon yourself to it. These are misfortunes, and not crimes. But at least be noble enough to do justice to your husband, and to accuse him of nothing, except of being thirty-five years of age, and of having married you. I wager that at this present time you have reposed the secret of your domestic griefs in the bosom of M. Octave, for he has recounted to you what he has had to suffer with Sylvia or with some one else, and this recital has awakened in you so much sympathy, that in one hour you have decided to make of him a friend and a brother. From this the natural consequences will result, and love-letters and meetings will follow in their own way. What a note was the first billet from M. Octave! what passion, what praises, what prayers, what tender expressions! and all this to you, Fernande! Moreover, you did not make him wait: you were first at the rendezvous, I bet! By this time, he will have told you plainly that it is you and not Sylvia whom he loves, or, at least, that if he have ever known and loved her, you have made him entirely forget her. This will have prevented you for a couple of days from going to the great elm; but the third day you will no longer have been able to keep to your resolution, and you are now in the charming delirium of Platonic love. It has been arranged that the honor of M. Jacques shall be respected, until

the senses surprise a victory, some fine evening, over the will. By means of a few louis from the pocket of M. Octave, has not Rosette already some sprain, some scratch on her foot, which prevents her walking as far as the entrance of the valley? Have I guessed rightly, or has nothing come to pass as I have supposed?

There is one chance which may have presented itself, and which would have changed the progress of things: it is this, that M. Jacques, astonished to see you become so brave—you who did not dare to cross the saloon in the dark a few days ago, and who now go across the park and the country at nine o'clock at night—may bethink himself of following and observing you. The least that he can do, as a wise and prudent husband, will be, to address to you a sermon, laconic but somewhat grave, and to find means to remove your lover. Despair will then kindle your passion, and you will become more ingenious and more skilful in conducting your secret relations.

M. Jacques' *misfortune* will be only the more sure and the more prompt. If M. Octave does not love you well enough to risk being killed in scaling your window, you will console yourself for this, and will set yourself to detest your husband; because, in her ill-humor, it is upon her husband especially that a woman lays the blame of all the sorrows that come to her. In that case, you will not be long in finding another lover, for your heart will call imperiously for some new affection to chase the sorrow and weariness by which you will be consumed. As you are not very patient to observe and comprehend the character of those in whom you confide, it will probably happen to you to make a wrong choice again, and then misfortune to you! You will go from an error to a fault, from rashness to ruin. One of the loveliest flowers that society has seen unfolded, will be withered and poisoned through her evil destiny and the weakness of her nature.

Whatever happens to you, Fernande, I will not abandon

you : to succor and to console you, I will vanquish the prejudices, too well founded and unhappily too necessary, which sustain the edifice of society. But my friendship will not be of much value to you, and I see with sorrow the abyss into which you precipitate yourself blindfold. Forgive the harshness of my letter ; if it wound you, I shall console myself for having caused you pain with the hope of having inspired you with a little prudence, and of having perhaps retarded, were it only for a few days, the deplorable fate toward which you are journeying.

XLVI.

Jacques to Sylvia.

FROM THE FARM OF BLOSSE.

THE business which brought me here was but a pretext. I have been struck by an unexpected misfortune ; it was impossible for me to speak of it, even to you. I left home without allowing my grief to appear ; I wished to put a dozen leagues between myself and *her*, in order to force myself to act with reflection. When, to communicate together, requires an interval of several hours, the will is not so easily carried away by violence. Here is what I have to tell you.

On Saturday evening you will remember that I left you at the house at Réau, to go and speak to the game-keepers round by Saint-Jean. We were to meet—you walking more slowly than I, and waiting for me, if you arrived there first, at the cross-ways of the great elm ; but, by a singular combination of chances, you mistook the road, and arrived straight at the château, while I hastened to meet you at the appointed place. It was very gloomy, you remember, and

a little rain had made the grass wet ; the sound of steps was entirely deadened. Thus I arrived at the spot without being remarked by those who were there. They were two, Fernande and a man. They kissed each other, and separated, saying, "*To-morrow.*" They had exchanged a few words in a low tone, of which I heard only one—*bracelet*. The man disappeared after having leaped over the hedge of the coppice. Fernande called several times to Rosette, who was apparently at a considerable distance, for she kept her waiting ; then they went off together, and I followed them at a certain distance. Fernande's manner was perfectly calm on entering the saloon, and when I asked her where she had been, she replied, with an astonishing assurance, that she had not left the park. I accompanied her to her chamber, and waited until she had taken off her bracelets. While she passed into her dressing-room, I examined them : one of the two had evidently been changed ; although it was exactly like the other—although it bore my cipher—it had not a little mark which the jeweller in Geneva, of whom I ordered them, had made upon both of them. I bade Fernande good-night calmly and without betraying any emotion ; she threw her arms round my neck with her usual tenderness, and reproached me, as she does every day, with not loving her enough. In the morning, she entered my chamber and loaded me with caresses, from which I escaped by inventing an excuse for leaving her precipitately. Then I felt that it was beyond my strength to dissimulate the horror which this woman caused me. I left home in the course of the day.

For several days I had remarked something extraordinary in Fernande's conduct. Those stories of a robber or a ghost with which the house had been filled appeared to me to explain, to a certain point, her emotion at the slightest noise. I had seen her trouble, her agitation, and God knows that they did not excite in me the shadow of a suspicion. When, drawn by her cries, we found her shut up in her chamber,

the idea never occurred to me that a man could have been bold enough to attempt to corrupt her without her having informed me of his attempts from the very first day. After this I saw her wandering about the park, writing more often than usual, having frequent confabulations with Rosette, displaying all at once more activity and gayety than I had seen in her for a long time, and, above all, passing from an excess of pusillanimity to a sort of boldness. And yet, may the sky crush me if the idea of watching her to find an explanation of these singularities ever occurred to me! She whom I had known so artless, so chaste, so true! She who was always accusing herself of faults which she had not, and of errors which she had not committed! Unfortunate one! who can have corrupted and withered her so quickly?

It must be that she has had in her heart some odious germ of impudence and perfidy; that her mother, in adorning her with all the graces of candor, has poured into her heart some drop of the poison that her own veins distil; or else it must be that the man who has succeeded, in so short a time, in obtaining the mastery over her, has something infernal in his breath, so that a woman can not touch his lips without being at the same moment debased and hardened to evil. I know that there are libertines so utterly corrupt, that they seem to be endowed with a supernatural power, and that in their hands innocence is changed to infamy as by a miracle. There are also women who are born with the instinct of effrontery. During the years of their early inexperience, this immodesty is veiled beneath the graces of youth, and resembles the confiding sincerity of childhood; but, from their first step in vice, everything with them becomes false and base. I have seen all this, and yet never could I have suspected Fernande; and I am now as much surprised, as much stupified with astonishment, as though some revolution had taken place in the courses of the stars.

And now the question is, what have I to do? As for

me, I am not troubled as to what will become of myself: contempt is the strongest support upon which a desolate soul can repose. I will leave her, and will only see her again when my children shall be of an age to receive the fatal impression of her example and of her lessons: then I will take them from her, and will insure to her a rich and independent existence. O God! O God! was it thus that I had dreamed of her future and of my own? But she lied without changing color; she embraced me without shame and without confusion; she reproached me for not loving her enough, the day when she deceived me! Who could have foreseen that hers would prove to be an evil heart, toward which the only part to be taken, is, to forget?

I have but one service to ask of you: it is, that you will not manifest any emotion, and that you will observe her attentively for several days. I think she loves her children; it has seemed to me that she has redoubled her cares and tenderness for them since she has found in another affection than mine the happiness for which she was eager. Nevertheless, I wish to know whether I am not mistaken, and whether this new love will not make her forget and despise the sacred claims of nature. Alas! I am now at such a point as to be able to suspect her of every crime! Observe her: do you understand? and if my children are to suffer from her passion, condemn her without mercy: I will then take them from her immediately, and go away with them without any explanation.

But no—that would be too cruel. She might neglect them for a few days without ceasing to love them: to tear her children from her in their cradle! her children whom she still nurses at her breast! Poor woman! this would be too hard a chastisement. Her nature is that of a wicked and ignoble woman; but she has for them at least the love that the animals have for their young. I will leave them with her, and you will remain with them; you will watch over them, will you not?

Adieu. I await your reply by the courier whom I send to you. Tell Fernande that business keeps me here, and that I have sent to inquire about my son, who was sick when I left. My poor children !

XLVII.

Sylvia to Jacques.

You are mistaken ; by the soul of our father ! I swear to you that you are mistaken. Fernande is not guilty : the man whom you saw is not her lover—he is mine : it was Octave. I have seen him, I know that he is here, and that it is he who wanders round the house. I thought he had gone ; but if you saw a man speaking to Fernande, it could only have been he. He must have addressed himself to her in order that she should assist him to bring about a reconciliation with me. The kiss which you heard must have been given to her on her hand. Octave is not a great character, and I have very little love left for him ; but he is at least an honest man, and I know him to be incapable of seeking to seduce your wife. As to her, it is impossible that she should allow herself to be thus seduced, or that she could lie with such assurance. I know nothing as yet ; what has happened seems to me strange ; I do not undertake to give you an explanation at present. I do not know how it can be that they are already friends ; but they are not lovers, I will answer for that. I know not their actual conduct, but their soul. Do not judge, keep tranquil, wait ; to-morrow you will know all ; I hope. I am sorry not to be able to give you a more satisfactory explanation to-day : but I do not wish to question Fernande ; I do not wish her to have any idea of your suspicions : all that I can venture to say

to you is, that she does not deserve them. Adieu, Jacques ; try to sleep to-night. Whatever happens, I will do whatever you wish : my life belongs to you.

XLVIII.

Fernande to Octave. •

COURAGE ! my friend, courage ! I have at last spoken to Sylvia, and I hope ; I found a favorable opportunity. You had so strongly urged me to precipitate nothing, that I trembled lest I should act too quickly ; but, on the other hand, I feared that I might never find a propitious moment. Never had I seen Sylvia so kind, so good, so expansive with me. She seemed to desire to understand me. She came into my chamber yesterday evening, and asked me why I was sad. I told her : Jacques had written to her from Blosse, to ask after the children, and had not addressed a line to me. I can not be offended at this preference, so marked, for Sylvia, but I may grieve at the wrong she does me. I told her so, ingenuously. She embraced me with effusion, saying, " Is it possible, my poor child, that I am a subject of grief to you—I who hoped to contribute to your happiness, to guard it, if not to augment it, by my tenderness ? What ! Fernande, do you think, then, that in Jacques' eyes I am a woman ?"—" No," replied I ; " I know, or at least I think I know, that you are his sister, but I am only the more sure of my unhappiness : he loves you better than me."—" No, Fernande ! no," she exclaimed ; " if it were so, my love and esteem for Jacques would be lessened. You are dearer to him than anything else in the world, you are his mistress, the mother of his children. And you love him above everything, do you not in truth ?"—" Above everything," I answered.

"And you have never wronged him seriously?"—"Never," said I eagerly: "I take God to witness."—"In that case, you have nothing to fear," she resumed; "it is true that Jacques is severe and inexorable on certain occasions, but he is gentle and tolerant with regard to little faults. Be sure, Fernande, that your lot is a very beautiful one, and that, if you are discontented with it, you are ungrateful. Alas! what would I not give to exchange with you? You can love with all the strength of your soul, you can venerate the object of your love, you can abandon yourself to it entirely: this is a happiness which I have never tasted."—"Is this quite true?" cried I, throwing my arms round her neck; "have you never loved?"—"I have loved a being whom I have never found, whom I shall never find," said she, "because it does not exist. All the men whom I have tried to love have resembled it at a distance; but, seen near, they were again themselves: and, from the moment when I understood them, I have loved them no longer."—"Oh! mon Dieu!" said I, "you have then tried many times?"—"Yes, many times," replied she, laughing, "and almost always my love has been ended on the eve of the day on which I had determined to avow it; twice only has it gone further: the second time it has even stood some rather serious experiences, and, after being nearly extinguished, has been at times almost rekindled, but not enough to employ all the power of loving which my soul feels within itself."—"It is not, then, through coldness or powerlessness of the heart, that you would devote yourself to solitude?"—"No, it is quite the contrary: it is through excess of riches and of energy. I feel in myself an ardent thirst to adore on my knees some sublime being, and I meet with only ordinary beings; I would make a divinity of my lover, and I have to deal with mere men."

Then, seeing her in so good a train for talking, I interrogated her more particularly upon her last love, and put several questions to her about your character. She told me

that you were the first man she had ever known, and the last lover of whom she has thought. "But," said she to me suddenly, "has Jacques never spoken of him to you?" — "Never." — "Has he not sometimes read you my letters since your marriage?" — "Never." — "He has done wrong," she answered; "but you—have you no idea of his character and of his face? Have you never seen him wandering about the park? Do you not think that he plays on the hautboy with much expression?" — "Ah! wicked Sylvia!" I exclaimed; "you know very well, then, that he is here?" — "And what has he said to you?" she continued, laughing, "for he has written to you." Then I threw myself into her arms, and almost at her feet, and I spoke to her with all the devotion and all the ardor of the friendship which I have vowed to you. In listening to me, her countenance assumed a strange expression of pleasure and interest. Oh! I hope, Octave, she loves you more than she says, more than she thinks. She interrupted me to ask me on what day I had seen you for the first time, and how you had accosted me. That embarrassed me somewhat; however, I told her nearly all, and asked her, in my turn, how she knew of our relations. "Because I saw, by chance, a note addressed to you, in Rosette's hands, and I recognised the character of the superscription. Could you not show me one of these notes?" she added; "I shall be curious to know in what manner he speaks of me." I ran to get the last but one,* in which she is spoken of exclusively. She read it very quickly, and gave it back to me with a smile; she walked up and down the room with some agitation, as Jacques does when he hesitates as to what course to adopt; and then, taking up her light, she said to me, "Adieu, Fernande; give me two or

* The reader should not forget that many letters have been suppressed in this collection. The editor has thought it right to publish only those which establish certain facts and certain sentiments necessary to the progress and the clearness of the biographies: those which serve only to confirm these facts, or which develop them with the prolixity of familiar relation, have been suppressed with discernment.

three days to reply to you concerning what I mean to do with regard to Octave : for to-night, I hope he may sleep as well as I shall." But although she affected a tone of mockery, there was an unusual radiance in her face. She embraced me so affectionately, and said to me so many kind and tender things on my own account, that it seemed to me she was enchanted with my conduct : she was waiting only to hear your advocate, in order to absolve you. Hope, Octave, - hope : now that she is apprized of our manœuvres, it is useless for us to see each other unknown to her. Let us wait a little ; if I see that her compassion makes good progress, I will send for you to come here, and you will throw yourself at her feet. But I rather think that she wishes to consult Jacques beforehand : let her do so, as it is unavoidable. O my friend ! how proud and happy I shall be if I should succeed in bringing happiness back to you ! Is it still possible to me ? The coldness of Jacques' conduct with regard to me drives me to despair, and almost discourages me from loving him. I will try to live on friendship ; your joy will fill my soul, and will take the place of that which I shall taste no more.

XLIX.

Eplbix to Jacques.

I TOLD you so, Jacques: you were mistaken. Fernande is pure as crystal; the heart of this child is a treasure of candor and artlessness. Why have you allowed yourself to suffer so much? Do you not know that there are times when one must refuse to believe the testimony even of eyes and ears? For myself, there are still some inexplicable circumstances in this adventure—that of the bracelet, for example. I have not been able to find any means of interrogating Fernande with regard to it; I could not have done so without betraying your observations and suspicions, and Fernande must never know that you condemned her without a hearing. But as her innocence in everything else is as evident to me as the sun, as well proven as the existence of the world, I think I may assure you that you were mistaken in thinking you heard the word *bracelet*, and that the jeweller's mark has never existed but on one of them. If there be any mystery between them with regard to it, be sure that it is as childishly innocent as the rest. Come back; I will relate everything to you; I will give you the most satisfactory explanations of everything that has happened. I know what they have written to each other, I have seen the letters, I know what they have said; Fernande has told me all with candor: they are two children. It might have been imprudent in Fernande to have acted thus with any other man than Octave; but Octave has the ingenuousness, and all the loyalty of a Swiss. Come back; we will talk of all this. Do not ask me why I did not tell you that Octave was here: I knew it—I had recognised him under a disguise at the last boar-hunt we had. It would have been

necessary, in order to make you comprehend this strange and romantic conduct, to confess to you that I had deceived you in saying that Octave had renounced me, and that our bonds had been broken by mutual consent. It is very true that I broke mine, but without consulting him, and without knowing how far he would suffer from this proceeding. You informed me that my presence had become necessary to you. I still loved Octave, but without enthusiasm and without passion. What I love best in the world is you, Jacques ; you know it ; my life belongs to you ; I owe everything to you ; I have no other duty, no other happiness, in this world, than to serve you. I therefore quitted Geneva without hesitating, and, to prevent useless and painful explanations, I set out without seeing Octave and without bidding him farewell. I knew that this new separation would pain him very much ; but I also knew that my affection would never do him any good, and that he would suffer less if he succeeded in renouncing it, than if he continued this struggle between hope and discouragement in which he has been engaged for more than a year. I thought that this rupture would be so much the easier, as I did not tell him where I was going : and that the time which he would lose in seeking me would be so much gained for his consolation. I told you that he had let me set out without regret, because you would have imagined that I had made a sacrifice for your sake, and this idea would have spoiled the happiness which you experienced in seeing me. No, it was no very great sacrifice, my friend ; I really have no longer any love for Octave. It is true that he is still dear to me as a friend, as an adopted child, and that, in my secret heart, I have wept for his sorrow, and prayed God to lighten it by laying it upon me ; but how entirely am I repaid for these secret griefs by seeing that I am useful to you, and that I have done some good to Fernande !

And now all is repaired. Octave had discovered my retreat : he came to sing and to sigh under my balcony, like a

lover from Seville or Grenada ; he recounted his sorrows to Fernande, and conjured her to intercede for him. What could I refuse to Fernande ? Come back : and, in order that things may pass off properly, take upon yourself to introduce us to each other, and invite him to remain some time with us. I engage to make him go away without cries and without reproaches, for I do not foresee that I shall take a fancy to leave you in order to follow him.

L.

Elbia to Octave.

You are a madman, and you have nearly done us a serious injury. Not seeing you appear again, I hoped you had gone away, while you amuse yourself with playing with the repose and honor of a family. Are you so much a stranger to the things of this world ? You, who reproach me incessantly with despising too much the real side of life, do you not know that the purest relation between a man and a woman may be misinterpreted even by the gentlest and the most honest persons ? You, who have blamed me with so much bitterness when I have, by too much independence of conduct, exposed my reputation to the doubts of those to whose opinion I was indifferent, how comes it that you are now so thoughtless, or so selfish, as to expose Fernande to the suspicions of her husband ? Happily this has not been the case, and nothing has been perceived by Jacques ; but I have discovered the childishnesses of your conduct. Any other than myself would have judged according to appearances ; happily I know you to be an honest man, and I know the purity of Fernande's heart. But what must be thought of your proceedings by the servants and the peasants whom you

have taken into the confidence of your puerile rendezvous ? Do you suppose that the man at whose house you are living, and the chamber-maid who accompanies Fernande to the four-ways, judge your intercourse to be innocent, and that they keep your secret very scrupulously ? And besides, all this mystery is useless. Why did you not write directly to me ? or, if you fancied that you needed an advocate, why did you not address yourself to Jacques, who regards you with friendship, and who has much more influence over my mind than Fernande ? I do not understand this foolishness of your not daring to present yourself. You must promptly terminate and repair your imprudences. Dress yourself like other people to-morrow, and come and dine with us. Jacques will invite you to pass some time at the château ; you must accept.

But listen, Octave. I have no love for you : formerly I thought I had ; perhaps it may even have been so ; for a long time I have felt nothing more than friendship in my heart. Do not be wounded by this, and believe that whatever I feel for you is very real and very sincere. I have no love for any other, and I do not think I shall ever have any. Cease to attribute to a caprice, or to a passing sadness, the resolution which I have taken to be no longer your mistress. The embraces of love are beautiful only between two beings who are both under its influence : to impose them upon friendship, is to profane it. What pure pleasures could you find henceforward in my arms, when you knew that I received you only through devotion ? Cease to think of it, and let us be brother and sister. I only withdraw from you a pleasure which has become steril : it is not I, it is yourself, who have destroyed the enthusiasm of the passion with which you had inspired me. But let us not make any more useless reproaches ; it is not your fault that I deceived myself. I can say to you that, in my soul, friendship and esteem have outlived love, and this is a testimony that a woman can rarely render to a man whom she knows as intimately as I

know you. If you disdain my friendship, and if you refuse it, it will be useless for you to remain here long : a few days will suffice to repair your follies ; if, on the contrary, you accept it, we shall all be happy to keep you among us as long as we can, and the tenderness of my sisterly affection shall be exerted to make you forget the harshness of my frankness.

L I.

Jacques to Elvira.

I SHALL be with you to-morrow ; to-day I am sick : I felt as though stricken down by fever on reading your letter ; until then I was so agitated that I did not feel how ill I was ; as soon as my moral being was relieved, my physical being perceived the terrible shock which it had received, and it has seemed as though about to dissolve. For a few hours I thought I was going to die, and I was about to send for you, when, the village doctor having bled me just in time, I grew better. I shall be quite well to-morrow. Do not be uneasy, and say nothing about it to Fernande. I have accused her unjustly, I have been culpable with regard to her ; I will not ask her forgiveness for it : confessions of this sort aggravate the evil ; but I will repair my fault. I feel that my affection for her has lost nothing of its fervor, and that suffering has not weakened my heart's powers of loving. I do not know whether I can still call Fernande's sentiment for me by the name of love, and I do not think that she can suffer, as I can, without growing weary. As for myself, it seems to me that I am the same as on the day when I pressed her in my arms for the first time : the same holy and beneficent warmth sustains the youth of my heart ; I am as

much devoted, as sure of myself, as able to bear calmly the daily sorrows which intimacy engenders. I feel not the least bitterness against the past, not the least weariness of the present, not the least discouragement in view of the future : yes, I love her still as I loved her then ; the only difference is, that I am rather less happy.

It seems to me that, in all this, Octave has acted very extravagantly ; but this is perhaps his character, and if so, he is not to be blamed for it. You are right in thinking that this childish affair must be cut short promptly, and that the bad effect which it may have produced, must be repaired in the eyes of our people. It is not possible to give them any explanation : any that could be given would not be worth the trouble. But a prompt *good understanding* between us four, and Octave seated at our table for a few weeks, will give a victorious answer to all evil commentaries.

You excuse yourself for having hidden from me the sacrifice you have made ; for it was a sacrifice, Sylvia. I know your heart. I know the tenderness and the compassion that are concealed beneath your noble pride and your peaceful firmness ; I know how you must have wept at the thought of Octave's tears, and that you could not afflict him without rending your own soul. You say that there is nothing so dear to you in this world as myself. Kind Sylvia ! that which should be dearest to you in this world you have not yet found. Will you ever find it ? and even should you do so, will it be for your happiness or for your unhappiness ? As for Octave, I entreat you to be very gentle and very kind to him. He is sufficiently to be pitied that he can not be loved by you : spare him all reproaches. For myself, however strange may have been his proceedings in addressing himself to my wife, rather than to me, I shall show him the friendship and esteem which he deserves. To-morrow, then ! You have saved me, Sylvia : but for you, I should have gone away, I should have abandoned Fernande ; I should have been criminal, and for ever unhappy. Poor

Fernande ! brave Sylvia ! Oh ! I shall still be very happy : I feel it. And my children, whom I thought I should not see again for five or six years — my darling children, whom I shall cover with loving tears !

LII.

Fernande to Clémence.

FOR once, my friend, I can neither be made angry nor be grieved by your letter : it is a burlesque, that is all. I am tempted to believe that you are seriously ill, and that you wrote to me during an attack of fever. If it were so, I should be very much distressed ; and I hope I am mistaken, as I should really be sorry to lose so good an occasion for a laugh. It is true, then, that immutable reason and august good sense have also their days of sleep and of wandering ! Dear Clémence, your state alarms me, and I conjure you to let the doctor feel your pulse !

Notwithstanding all your fine prognostications and your obliging condemnations, nothing has happened of all that you have foreseen. I am no more in love with M. Octave, than M. Octave is in love with me. We love each other very much and very sincerely, it is true ; but I am not in love with any one but Jacques, and he is not in love with any one but Sylvia. He knew her so well, and he deceived me so little, that Sylvia has confirmed to me, word by word, all that he had told me of their loves and their quarrels. I have succeeded in persuading her at least to give him back her friendship, and this morning Jacques has aided me in bringing about a reconciliation between them. I had been rather uneasy about Jacques, who has passed four days at the farm at Blossé, and who did not write to me during all that time,

although he sent a courier every day to Sylvia ; at length, this morning, they have confessed to me that Jacques has been very sick, and that for several hours he was near dying. He is still as pale as death ; never have I seen him look so handsome as with this air of depression and melancholy. There is a languor in his manner, and a tenderness in his glance, which would make me distractedly in love with him, if I were not so already. But I beg your pardon : this is in open contradiction to what has been decreed by your wisdom and penetration. In fact, the beautiful days of our passion have returned ; do not be displeased about it, my dear Clémence.

To continue this recital, I will tell you, then, that I had given Octave a meeting, and that the next morning, during breakfast, the sound of the hautboy was heard under the window. You should have seen the faces of the servants ! “ The ghost, the ghost, in broad daylight ! ” they cried, with stupified looks. “ Go, Fernande,” said Jacques to me with a smile, “ go and seek your protégé ; ” and, when Octave ended his air, Sylvia and my husband clapped their hands, laughing. I left the table, and threw my napkin over his head to make a ghost of him. He entered thus, with an air of mystery, and I led him to Sylvia’s feet, whereupon she uncovered his face, and gave him a slap on one cheek and a kiss on the other. Jacques embraced him, and invited him to remain with us as long as he pleased, promising to make Sylvia more humane toward him. Octave was quite moved, and seemed as timid as a child ; he forced himself to appear gay, but he regarded Sylvia with an expression of mingled fear and joy. I, who hope a great deal from all this, and who have found Jacques so amiable to-day, was transported to such a degree that I cried like a simpleton at every word that was said by either of them. At length we made Octave take some breakfast ; he had eaten nothing all the morning, and began to devour at an amazing rate. He was seated between Sylvia and me ; Jacques smoked by the

window, and we no longer spoke to each other save with our eyes ; but what joy and comfort we all felt in our hearts ! Sylvia quizzed Octave a little upon his great appetite, which she said was not at all in character with a hero of romance. He revenged himself by kissing her hand, and from time to time he pressed mine also, which he kissed when he rose from the table ; and Jacques, coming to us, embraced me, and said to him, " I thank you for having given her your friendship : she is an angel, and you have divined her truly." The rest of the day was spent in running about, and in music. My children's cradle is always by our side, whether we are at the piano or seated in the garden. Octave lavishes caresses and little cares upon my twins ; he is passionately fond of children, and thinks mine charming ; he puts them to sleep with the sound of his hautboy, as though by *magic*, as you say, and Jacques takes great pleasure in witnessing the proceedings of the magician. In fact, we have had a very pure and a very beautiful day. We are going, I hope, to have a life rather different from that which, in your smiling imagination, you had prepared for me. I am really distressed at having to vex you, my good Clémence, by declaring to you that, for this once, your great knowledge is at fault, and that I am not yet lost. I thank you for the irrevocable decree by which you condemn me to be so before long : the prediction seems to me to be charitable, and very finely expressed ; but I shall ask your permission to wait a few days longer before I allow myself to fall over the precipice. And you, Clémence, when will you marry ? Are you not a little weary of celibacy ? Are you still quite contented to be living in a convent at twenty-five ? Is it not a very fine thing to be a widow, independent, and without love ? I envy your fate : you will not be *lost* !—you have placed yourself behind the grating, and under lock and key, to be more sure of your honor and your virtue ; you know that, guarded thus, they will not escape. Permit me to love my husband for a few years before entering upon this august

permanency. Adieu, my fair one; I give you joy. I will try to take a liking to your fate, and to detach myself from human affections, in order that I may be able to enter into the impassibility of intellectual annihilation.

LIII.

Octave to Herbert.

I HARDLY know what is passing in my head. I can not sleep, I am in a fever, I am like a man who is beginning to be in love; but with whom can I be in love, if it be not of Sylvia? However, I know nothing about it; I live with two charming women, and I seem to myself to be equally in love with them both. I am excited, contented, active; everything amuses me: I have freaks of wanting to laugh like a little child, and of wanting to gambol about like a little dog. Perhaps I have at last discovered the sort of life that suits me. To have nothing that I am obliged to do; to be pleasantly occupied with drawing and music; to live in a quiet and beautiful country, with amiable friends; to hunt, to fish; to see around me beings filled with the same happiness, and inspired with the same tastes—yes, this is a sweet and holy life.

I will confess to you that I was beginning to be seriously in love with Fernande, when, happily, Sylvia discovered the romance, and brought it to an end with a few reproaches and a shake of the hand. She did well: this romance was exciting my brain too much; these meetings, these forests, these summer-nights, these letters, these sweet confidences, Fernande afflicted by the coldness of her husband, and shedding her beautiful tears in my bosom—all this was becoming quite too intoxicating for my poor head. I thought no

more of Sylvia than as though she had never existed, and I shunned every opportunity of succeeding in my pretended enterprise. But I can not feel much remorse for all the follies that passed through my mind during these days of happiness and of imprudence. What man in my place would not have done worse? But I am a very ingenuous rascal, and I find my happiness in the thought and in the hope of crime, rather than in the crime itself. I have a horror of those pleasures which must be bought by perfidy and paid for by remorse. To draw Fernande to a rendezvous, and gently to kiss her hands, while she called me her friend and her brother, seemed to me much more agreeable than to receive the embraces of passion and of despair. I have never seduced any one, and I do not think that the reproaches and the terrors of a woman can add much to one's happiness; and besides, there is a strange pleasure in protecting and respecting a purity which confides in you, and abandons itself to you! The idea that I was able to overthrow this artless soul, and to ravish this treasure, sufficed for my pride: I tasted a refinement of vanity in not abusing her confidence while seeing her in my power.

Nevertheless, I was beginning to be too much moved: I no longer knew what I said; and if Fernande have not divined what was passing within me, she must be as pure as a virgin. I believe, in fact, that she is so, and this increases my respect, my enthusiasm—shall I say my love? Well! yes, think of me what you will, I am in love with her at least as much as with Sylvia. What does this matter? I shall never again be Sylvia's lover, and I shall never seek to be the lover of Fernande. Sylvia has declared to me formally, clearly, and obstinately, that henceforth we shall be friends and nothing more. I know not whether this be the course on which she has really decided, or whether it be a test to which she chooses to make me submit; for my own part, I am somewhat weary of her caprices, and I feel that spite will aid me powerfully in consoling myself. It is, however,

very certain that Sylvia deceives herself, if she thinks I shall be in the humor to accept her pardon at some future time. I renounce her love, and my own will have succeeded in extinguishing itself before she takes the pains to rekindle it.

Notwithstanding this strange passion, and the somewhat problematical relations which exist between us, it is impossible to have an existence more sweet than ours. Jacques, Sylvia, and Fernande, are certainly choice friends, of the purest intelligence, and disengaged from all prejudices, from all narrow and vulgar considerations. Sylvia carries this independence too far for the happiness of a lover; but, contemplating her only in the light of friendship, she is a being of a sublime originality. Jacques has many of her ideas and sentiments; but he is less absolute, and his temper is more amiable and more gentle. I did not know him: I had misjudged him; the manner in which he has welcomed me, the confidence which he has shown me, the loyalty with which he has accepted my pretended friendship for his wife, have in them something so noble and so grand, that I should despise myself if I could think of finding him ridiculous. To betray this confidence is an idea which fills me with horror, a temptation which I do not need to combat. The love which Fernande has for him, and which I admire as one of the divinest things in her soul, will suffice to preserve her for ever. I know not how I can separate myself from her, how I can renounce the delight of passing my days at her side; but it is certain that I will separate from her without leaving any bitterness in her heart, and without carrying away any remorse in my own. I wish I could find some means of establishing myself in their neighborhood, and of seeing them every day, without living with them, and without depending upon a caprice of Sylvia, who may drive me to-morrow from the home in which she dwells, without my having anything to say against it, since it is known that I am only here for her sake, and through her permission. There is a pretty little house which formerly served as the

parsonage, and which is in a delightful situation, half a league from the mountain : if, by paying twice the price of his rent to the old soldier who lives in it, I could persuade him to give it up to me, I should be the happiest and the best-lodged of men. Send me a small sum which my man of business will hand to you, and all the music which is in my chamber. If I succeed in establishing myself in my parsonage, I shall want you to come and pass the rest of the summer with me. You are a little in love with Sylvia, although you have never said much about it. We will both live on hunting, fishing, music, and contemplative love.

LIV.

Fernande to Clemence.

No, my friend, no, I am not angry ; it is possible that I may have had a moment of bitterness and irony when I answered you—your letter was so harsh and so cruel !—but I assure you that mine has quite sufficed to vent all my vexation, and that since I wrote it, I have thought no more of our quarrel than as though nothing had occurred. If I went too far in my reply, forgive me, and, another time, deal more gently with me. Indeed, I did not deserve so severe a lesson : I had acted rather foolishly, it is true, but my heart had remained so entirely a stranger to the sentiments which you supposed in me, that this time I could not accept your judgment as a useful truth. It seemed to me that I saw in your way of treating me a sort of contempt, which I could not and which I ought not to bear. For the love of Heaven, let us never speak of it again ! You have been angry with me a long time, and you have waited until I have written you three letters before you tell me that you have been offended.

I hope that, in the perseverance with which I have written to you, you will see a friendship which is proof against the mortifications of self-love, as it ought to be. Let all bitterness, then, be forgotten, and return to me, as I return to you, sincerely and with joy.

You show so much indifference to me, and you say that you shall consider yourself in future as being so far removed from all that concerns me, that I hardly dare to speak to you again. Nevertheless, I wish I could persuade you to resume our correspondence, just as it was. It was so pleasant to me to recount my life to you, week by week! It seemed to me that my sorrows were lightened by one half, when I had confided them to you: but now it is true that I have no more sorrows. Never have I been happier or more tranquil. All the little wounds which we inflicted on each other, Jacques and I, are healed for ever; there is nothing now to make us suffer; we understand each other entirely, we divine each other.

I have been very culpable toward him, and I can not imagine how I could so often accuse him, he who has in his soul but one thought, one desire, that of my happiness. All this seems to me now like a dream, and I can not explain to myself how it could have happened: perhaps we were too much alone with each other, and too little occupied. A little society and amusement is necessary at my age, and even at that of Jacques; for he also is happier since we have had a family round us. I told you that Octave had installed himself in a charming little dwelling, whither we all repair to ask him to breakfast once or twice a week. As to him, he comes every day to find us.

For two months during the summer he had with him one of his friends, M. Herbert, a brave Swiss, full of frankness and sweetness. We have done nothing but hunt, eat, laugh, sail, and sing; and what nights of delightful sleep after all this fatigue and gayety! Sylvia is the soul of our pleasures; I do not know on what terms she is with Octave; he

does not complain of her, and although they pretend to be only friends, I firmly believe that they are more lovers than ever. Sylvia grows handsomer and more amiable every day; she is so strong, and so active, that she draws us into her activity like a whirlwind. She is always awake the first, and it is she who arranges our day and decrees our amusements, in which she takes part so heartily, that she forces us to be as much amused as herself. Jacques, with his coolness, is the most comic and the most amusing of us all; he does all sorts of droll and roguish things, with such an imperturbable gravity, and his way of playing the fool is so gentle, so gentlemanly, and so quiet, that one never wearies of it. Octave is more turbulent, he is so young! he leaps, he runs, he sports about in our fields, like a runaway colt. His friend Herbert, while he was here, was charged with the duty of reading while we drew or embroidered, on rainy days, or when it was too warm. In the midst of all this happiness, my children grow like little mushrooms: it is who shall love them the most! Never have I seen children so petted and so caressed; Octave is the one whom my daughter prefers: he sits down by her on the carpet, where she is rolling about in the sun, and for hours together she amuses herself with passing her little hands through the long fair hair of her friend. Sylvia is the favorite of my son; she holds him on her knees, and plays with one hand on the piano, and he listens as though he understood the language of the notes: from time to time he turns toward her with a smile of admiration, and tries to speak; but he can only utter inarticulate sounds, which, according to Sylvia, are very precise and very logical replies to the language of the piano. You should hear her interpretations, and the translations she gives of his slightest gestures, and see the seriousness, the attention, with which Jacques listens to it all. Ah! we are very childish, all of us, and very happy.

Since Herbert left us, and the cold has begun to make itself felt, we have been rather more sedentary. However,

we have still the bright days of autumn, and our evenings have taken a shade of delicious melancholy. Sylvia improvises on the piano, while we are seated around the hearth, where the vine-branches are crackling. Sylvia never comes to the fire : she is of a sanguine temperament, and is always afraid lest the blood should rush to her head. My old smoker Jacques walks up and down the room, and every now and then gives a kiss to his sister and to me. Then he taps Octave on the shoulder, and says to him, "Are you sad?" Octave raises his head, and we sometimes perceive that his face is covered with tears. It is the effect of Sylvia's strange improvisations, sometimes sad, sometimes wild and half crazy. Then Jacques and Octave recount to each other the different poetic dreams which have come to them while listening to the modulations of the piano, and it is curious to see how differently the same notes and the same sounds act upon the nerves of each of them : sometimes Jacques is mounted on the horse in the Apocalypse, while Octave is sleeping on the straw of a prison ; at other times it is Jacques who is overwhelmed with sadness in some frightful desert, while Octave is hovering with the sylphs round the chalices of flowers beneath the light of the moon. There is nothing more amusing than to hear the fantasies that pass through their minds. Sylvia rarely takes part in these narrations ; she is the fairy who evokes the apparitions, and contemplates them without emotion and in silence, as things which she is accustomed to govern. That which amuses her most is, to see the effect of the music upon Octave's hound, and to interpret the singular howls which he utters at certain phrases of harmony : she pretends to have discovered the accord and the combination of sounds which act upon the fibres of this vaporizing animal, and asserts that his sensations are much more lively and more poetic than those of the gentlemen. You can not imagine how these trifles occupy and divert us. When there are several together who love each other as we do, the ideas and tastes of each become common

to all, and a sympathy is established, so lively and so complete, that one soul seems to animate several bodies.

Adieu, my friend. Write to me ; and, as you have formerly taken part in my grief, take part in my joy.

L V.

Octave to *Fernande*.

> FERNANDE, I can bear it no longer ; I am choking ; this virtue is beyond my strength. I must speak and flee, or die at your feet : I love you ; it is impossible that you do not know it. Jacques and Sylvia are sublime beings, but they are fools, and I too am mad, and you also, Fernande. How could they, how could we suppose, that I could live between Sylvia and you without loving one of you passionately ? For a long time I flattered myself that I should love only Sylvia ; but Sylvia has willed it otherwise. She has repulsed me with an obstinacy that has driven me from her, and by degrees my heart has obeyed her decision : without anger and without effort, it has fallen back upon friendship, and it is certain that this sentiment between herself and me has made me much happier than love. It is thus that I ought always to have loved her, and it is thus that I shall love her all my life, calmly, deeply, reverently. But you, Fernande—I love you a thousand times more than I ever loved her : I love you with transport, with despair, and I must leave you ! O God ! why have I known you ?

You ask me every day why I am sad ; you are uneasy about my health. You do not comprehend, then, that I am not your brother, and that I never can be ? You do not see that I drink in the poison at every pore, and that your friendship is killing me ? What have I done, that you

should love me with this pitiless tenderness and this cruel sweetness ? Drive me from you, ill-treat me, or speak to me as to a stranger. I write to you in the hope of irritating you ; whatever you do, whatever misfortune happens to me, will be a change : the stifling calm in which we live oppresses me, and will drive me mad. For a long time I was happy near you. Your friendship, which now irritates me and makes me suffer, was, at first, a divine balm to the wounds of my torn heart. I was uncertain, agitated, full of an unknown hope, transported by desires which I could not explain, and whose aim seemed to me to be an eternity with you. I was so weary of the things of earth, Sylvia had lately made love appear to me so vexatious and so harsh, and my heart had been so shattered by what I had suffered in losing, finding, and losing her again, that I hardly hoped for anything more in this world, and felt a disposition to live only on dreams and chimeras. I must tell you all my madness : from the first moment I saw you, I loved you, not with a peaceful and fraternal friendship, as I professed, but with a romantic and intoxicating love. I abandoned myself to this sentiment, at once lively and pure ; if I had been repulsed and thwarted, perhaps it would at once have become a violent passion ; but you received me with so much confidence and ingenuousness ! Afterward, Jacques invited me so trustfully to share the happiness of beholding you every day, that I accustomed myself to contemplate you without daring to listen to the suggestions of passion. I then thought that this would continue to satisfy me, or, at least, I said to myself that whenever this sentiment should cause me too much suffering, I should have the strength to go away ; now, I could more willingly find the strength to die. Where is that time when, to kiss your hand, made me so happy ? when a glance from you would rest in my eyes and in my soul through a whole night ? I confess to you, Fernande, in my sleep you were mine, and that sufficed for me. The love, not yet extinct, which I had borne to Sylvia, rekindled

from time to time, and the currents of my heart changed according as circumstances drew me more intimately to her or to you. How often have I pressed in my arms a phantom which wore her features and your own, and whose long ebony tresses, mingled with flakes of golden silk, fell over my shoulders and lay upon my heart ! In the delirium of those happy nights, I called to you both by turns, I invoked your affection, and I seemed to see both of you descend from heaven and kiss my forehead ; but insensibly the features of Sylvia were effaced, and the phantom appeared to wear yours only. Sometimes, through habit, through terror, perhaps through remorse, I still called upon the image of your companion, but she no longer answered me ; and you passed incessantly before my eyes, like a revelation of my destiny, like a prophecy obeying the command of God. Then I abandoned myself to my passion, and my sufferings began ; but I offered my grief to you as a sacrifice. I saw you in love with Jacques, and with reason : I love and venerate this man : can I desire to snatch from him his most precious blessing ? I would rather assassinate him. For a long time this idea of virtue and of devotion sustained my courage : I said to myself, very truly, that it would be more prudent and more easy to flee from you than to remain eternally silent. But it was too late : I no longer had the power to do so ; anything seemed to me more supportable than to cease to see you. For eight months I have refrained from speaking ; I have supported heroically this terrible winter passed at your side, without anything to turn away my thoughts, and almost alone with you, for you can not deny that we four make two : Jacques and Sylvia make one, you and I make another ; they perfectly understand each other in everything, and we understand each other in the same way. When we are all together, we seem like two friends who converse together upon their pleasures and their pains, and who mutually reveal to each other what they feel and what they are. But you and I never relate anything to each oth-

or ; we have but one soul, and we have no need to express to each other what we feel in common. And yet I need to pour out this imperious and intoxicating sympathy which I drink in silence. It is not through words that we can understand each other ; they are useless : we answer one another in our glances and in the beating of our hearts. But this fire that kindles and brightens from day to day within us, needs the embraces and the ardent grasp of passion ; for you love me, perhaps ! Ah ! forgive me, Fernande, I am becoming crazed. Adieu ! adieu ! I shall leave to-morrow. Do not despise me ; I have done what I could ; my strength can go no further.

LVI.

Fernande to Octave.

OCTAVE ! Octave ! what are you doing ? whither are you wandering ? You are mad, my friend ! You are my brother ; you have sworn it before God and before me ; you can not thus perjure yourself, you can not thus sully your honor, you whom I know to be so noble and so pure ! Can I love you otherwise than as a sister loves her brother ? What frightful thoughts harass your poor head ! You are sick. O my dear Octave, you are suffering, I see it : phantoms evoked by fever trouble your sleep ; reason, memory, and judgment, abandon you. You fancy that you love me, and if I responded to you, you would abhor this love as a crime. No, my friend, you do not love me as you think you do ; you feel the need of loving, and you mistake your own feelings. It is Sylvia whom you love ; or, if it be no longer her, it is some being whom you desire, and who exists for you in some other place, whither you must go and seek her. Yes,

you are right ; go—travel : you must turn your thoughts from this folly. Alas ! you can no longer live here, and I had thought that we should grow old together, and I was so happy in this idea ! But you will be cured, you will come back, Octave ; you will come back with a companion worthy of you, and the happiness of all of us will be purer and more peaceful. You say that I must have divined your love. I should have lived with you thus for a thousand years, with this sacred confidence in your word, without ever dreaming that it could be possible for you to perjure yourself, even in the secret depths of your heart. And even now I am sure that you are mistaken. I contemplate your grief with the surprise and the solicitude which I should feel if I saw you attacked by a sudden pain, a fit of madness, or some terrible convulsions. What should I think then ? Nothing, except that the evil that had befallen you would make me suffer as much as yourself. How could I be angry, or think you guilty ? I would take the tenderest care of you ; I would try to calm you with gentle words, with holy caresses, and this would do you good. My beloved friend, return to me, return to us : forget this unhappy shock. Let us burn these two letters, and let us think no more of it. It is all a dream ; nothing has occurred. No one has heard the words that you have uttered in your delirium : they are buried in my heart, and have not altered its calmness or its tenderness. Can a friendship such as ours be broken by an instant of error and of suffering ? Go, my friend, but come back without fear and without shame as soon as you are cured. This lightning-flash will leave no dark traces in our bright sky ; and when you return, you will find us such as you leave us.

LVII.

Octave to *Fernande*.

You are right, my beloved sister : I am mad. My brain and heart are sick ; I must have courage, and go away. You are an angel, *Fernande* ; what a letter have you written to me ! Ah ! you will never know the good and the evil that it has done me. Persuade yourself that it is a sickness, and try to persuade me that I shall be cured of it, and that I shall be able to come back : for the idea of leaving you for ever is beyond my strength. Invoke my word, and the sanctity of the ties that bind us ; invoke the respected and beloved name of *Jacques* ; say to me all that must be said in order to give me the strength that I need. Oh ! I shall have this strength, *Fernande* ; your sweetness and your compassion will save us both. I did not expect this pitying tenderness with which you console even while you repulse me : I hoped that you would repulse me harshly, and that I might have loved and esteemed you less. Then, to your misfortune, I should have stayed, and perhaps I should have succeeded in accomplishing your ruin. But what can I do in presence of a virtue so calm and so compassionate ? The meanest of villains would fall on his knees before you, and you know that I am an honest man : I have a heart. Adieu, *Fernande* ; adieu, my darling sister ; adieu, my last and only love ; I will become whatever God shall please, and will be cured or die. My fate is of no consequence ; the point of importance is, that you remain pure and happy ; I will leave you with this idea, and it shall sustain me. You must forgive me a theft which I have committed : the bracelet which you threw to me from the window, one evening when you mistook me for *Jacques*, has never left me. That which

you have is an exact copy which I had made at Lyons, and which I gave to you that I might not offend you by my resistance. I have not had the courage to divest myself of this first pledge of an affection which has become to me so necessary and so fatal; but now that my heart is no longer innocent, I dare not take away this bracelet without your permission. You can not refuse it to me, when I leave you, perhaps for ever. I accomplish the most terrible of all sacrifices: will you have no pity? I shall perhaps pay for my devotion with my life, and your generosity will cost you nothing, for no one could divine the fraud. I have had Jacques' cipher, which was interlaced with yours, effaced from the crest on my bracelet, and have had it replaced by my own. If, at this terrible and solemn moment in which I leave you, you grant me this pledge of forgiveness, it will become more dear to me than ever.

I shall say this evening that I am going away to-morrow; I will find a pretext: I will promise to return. But shall I depart without bidding you adieu, without covering your hands with my tears? Do not avoid being alone with me, as you have done since yesterday, Fernande; what have you to fear? Are you not sure of yourself? And if I had a moment of weakness and of despair, do you not know that at one word you would see me at your feet, the most silent and the most resigned of men? Ah! do not flee from me, do not make me suffer during this last day that I shall pass with you. If my tears pain you, if my complaints weary you, do you also have courage: it needs much more for me to leave you. Remember that to-morrow your task will be ended, and that mine will only have begun—frightful, eternal. Remember that I am upon the steps of the scaffold, and that God will not call you to account for a word of pity granted to me while sending me to martyrdom.

LVIII.

Octave to *Fernande*.

O my angel, O my beloved, we are saved! May God cover you with his benedictions, O purest and holiest of his creatures! Yes, you are right: one has all the strength that one wills to have, and Heaven abandons not to danger those who recommend themselves to him in the sincerity of their heart. What would have become of me away from you? My soul would have been defiled by regrets, by fury, by projects, and perhaps by insensate undertakings again to find and take possession of you, instead of which, you will aid me to be virtuous and tranquil like yourself. The continual spectacle of your angelic serenity will cause the same calm to pass into my heart and into my senses. I should have been lost had you withdrawn from me your helpful hand: let me hold it to my lips, and let it lead me whithersoever it will. I am resigned to every sacrifice. I will be silent, and I shall be cured. And am I not already cured? Have I not proved my strength during those hours of the night which you allowed me to pass in your chamber? I was mad when I arose to go to you, and bid you farewell. And this Jacques, whom chance led to leave home yesterday evening, precisely in the midst of this most terrible attack of my fever and wandering! Ah! this was the will of Providence. If you had refused to see me, I should have broken down your door. I no longer knew what I was doing; you opened your door to me, and you did well. Is there a transport in the world that could resist the holy confidence of a being so chaste, so divine, as you? You, too, were not asleep; O my beloved child! you were not even undressed, and you were praying for me! Angel of heaven, God heard you! When

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I saw you so beautiful, so candid, in your white dress and with your fair hair falling over your shoulders, with your affectionate smile on your lips, and your large eyes still wet with the tears that you had been shedding for me, I seemed to see a virgin from Elysium, and I fell at your feet as before an altar. Oh! how gently did you listen to my sorrow, with what ineffable tenderness did you dry my tears! and you yourself embraced me, weeping, O sublimely imprudent one! But what immaterial being are you, then? and what divine power have you received from on high to calm the furies of despair with the caresses that should kindle them? Your lips felt so cool upon my forehead! It seemed to me that an ineffable balm passed into all my arteries, and that my blood became as pure, as peaceful, as that of your children who were sleeping beside us. Oh! how beautiful they are, those children of yours, and how much I love them! There is already on your daughter's brow a reflex of your virgin soul. I would have carried her off, if you had driven me from you; I could not have forsaken this cradle in which I have so often lulled her to sleep; for my soul was crushed at the thought of living alone and abandoned, I who, for eight months, have been living amid ineffable affections. With yourself, my most precious treasure, how many blessings was I about to lose!—the friendship of Sylvia, who is so great, so enlightened, so beautiful! and that of Jacques, which I would purchase with my blood! Where could I ever again have found such hearts? Who could have made life bearable to me, away from you all?

Blessed be you, my Fernande! you did not will my despair, and when I asked you whether it would be possible for us to live near each other without danger, it was God who dictated your reply. Ah! that *yes*! with what enthusiasm and with what confidence did you speak it! it struck me as with an electric shock; I so little expected this word of encouragement and of pardon! One instant, one word sufficed to make me another man. Since you are sure of me, I

am sure of myself: it would have been a cowardice to flee when I could vanquish myself; and besides, is it, then, so difficult? I can no longer conceive why I have been a prey to these phrensied agitations: it must have been because a danger seems always more terrible at a distance than when near: it must have been, moreover, because I did not know you when I feared lest I might succumb and drag you down along with me; I supposed that you were a woman like all others, and you are a divinity that no human soil can touch. I could not imagine that, instead of fear or anger, when I confessed to you my torments, I should find this impassible confidence upon your brow, and this pitying smile upon your lips. I feared that you would tear yourself from my arms with terror, and that when I approached my lips to your face, to give you, as in former days, a fraternal kiss, that you would turn from me with indignation. But your innocence braves all vulgar perils, and tranquilly surmounts them. Ah! I shall be able to raise myself to your height, and dwell with you above the storms of earthly passions, in a heaven always radiant, always pure. Let me love you, and let me still give the name of love to this strange and sublime sentiment which I feel; *friendship* is a word too cold and too vulgar for so ardent an affection; human language has no name with which to baptize it. But is not the name of love applied also to the affection of mothers for their children, and to the enthusiasm of religious faith? The sentiment with which you inspire me participates in all these, but it is also something more. Ah! know that I must love you very deeply, Fernande, to be able to experience the calm which has descended upon me during the last six hours. Strange and delightful thing! on returning to my chamber, purified by my resolutions, appeased by your chaste embracing, I fell into the soundest and the most beneficent sleep that I have had these three months; and I have just awakened, calmer and more joyful than I have ever been in my life. Oh! how much good your words

have done me ! Write to me ; repeat to me all that you have said to me : so that I may read it on my knees if any cloud of melancholy should again overshadow my beautiful sky, that I may again behold thy pure light, O my radiant guiding-star ! It seems to me that I see the sun for the first time, so young and so lovely does all nature appear to me this morning ! I have just heard the first sound of the bell which summons you to breakfast, and it thrilled through me like the voice of a friend ! What a beautiful life ! how happy we are !— How near to you do I live, Fernande ! the east wind brings me the sounds of your home and the perfumes of your garden. I shall have time to dress myself, and to go and take my seat at the same table with you, before Sylvia has finished the methodical arrangement of her books and pencils in the large saloon. How ! I am going to see all this again ! all this that I thought, last evening, I was leaving for ever ! I am going again to laugh and talk at that table on which one is allowed to set both one's elbows, and from which one may rise as many times as one chooses in the course of a meal ! I am going to sing again with you our favorite duet ! Oh ! what a day of rejoicing ! If you knew how lovely the moon looked when she set this morning, as I crossed the valley to return to my house ! How the grass seemed to be sown with pale diamonds, and how fresh and soft an odor was exhaled from the first almond-blossoms ! But you perceived all this, for you were at your window, and I saw you as long as the distance permitted you to be visible to me. You accompanied me with your eyes, O my lovely friend ! you accompanied me with your wishes ; you asked of God to preserve pure within me the work of your pious efforts, this new soul which you have given me—this new virtue which you have revealed to me ! Quick, quick, I fold up my letter, and I set out ; I have just looked through the glass which is fixed at my window, and which is directed toward your house : I see Sylvia in her blue dress, in the garden. You are still sleeping, my little

angel, or you are dressing your children : I am coming to help you, and to play on the hautboy to keep your little girl from crying when you put on her socks. And our Jacques ! he will return this evening, will he not ? I shall embrace him as though I had not seen him for ten years ! As to you, I shall embrace you no more, but you will let me kiss your feet and the hem of your dress as much as I please.

LIX.

Fernande to Octave.

THE idea of leaving us was, indeed, frightful and impossible. I was sure that you would have the strength to stifle a fatal thought, rather than abandon me. I counted on your friendship when I said to you, " Yes, you can do it ; remain, Octave ; renounce these guilty dreams ; make a noble effort over yourself ; open your eyes—see how warmly and how holily you are beloved, how happy you may be with these three friends who vie with each other in cherishing you, and how much you will suffer in solitude from remorse for having grieved one of these sincere hearts, and from regret for having afflicted the two others by your departure. Examine your soul, and see how beautiful, young, and strong, it is : can it not, of two sacrifices, choose the one that is noblest and most generous ? Are you not sure that you will always govern your passions ? do you wish me to believe that your senses can overrule your heart ? Shall I not be present to raise your courage, if it should become enfeebled ? Will you be deaf to my voice when it shall speak to you imploringly ? and these gentle tears that you are now shedding, will they be dry when mine shall flow ?" O, my dear Octave ! while speaking to you thus, I felt that God

inspired me : a confidence, a miraculous faith, descended into my soul ; I had, as it were, a revelation of what was about to take place between us, and my resolution and your enthusiasm, at this moment, were, in fact, a prodigy. You know not how beautiful you became when you fell upon your knees, and lifted your arms toward Heaven, to invoke it as the witness of your vows ; how your pale face became ruddy and animated ; how your eyes, weary and sunken, were illuminated by a sudden flame. This ray of heaven has left its radiance on your countenance, and since yesterday it has worn a different expression, a different beauty—such as I have never known in you before. Your voice also has changed : there is in it something that penetrates me like delicious music ; and when you read aloud, I do not listen to the words—I do not comprehend the meaning of what you say ; the mere harmony of your voice moves me, and makes me long to weep. I myself seem to be quite changed : I have new faculties, I comprehend a thousand things which I did not comprehend yesterday. My heart is warmer and richer ; I love my husband, my sister Sylvia, and my children, more than ever ; and for you, Octave, I feel an affection for which I will not seek any name, but with which God inspires me, and which God will bless. Ah ! how great and pure you are, my friend ! how different you are from other men, and how very few among them are capable of comprehending you ! What would have become of me if you had left us ? Even now, the mere thought of losing you startles me, and fills me with sorrow. Do you know, my friend, how necessary you are to us, and above all to me ? What you wrote me the other day is very true : we make but one. Never did two characters agree so perfectly, never did two hearts understand each other so entirely as ours. Jacques and Sylvia resemble each other and do not resemble us, and this is why we love them so much ; this is why we have been able to love them with passion ; but we could not love each other with that sort of love. It seems

to me that love needs for its aliment differences of tastes and opinions, little sorrows, pardons, tears—all that can excite sensibility, and reawaken daily solicitude. Friendship, fraternal love, if you like to call it so, is more happy, and more equably pure; it affords a refuge from all the ills of life; it is a supreme consolation for the sorrows that are caused by love. Before I knew you, I had a friend to whose bosom I confided all my griefs, and although she was very harsh and very severe in her replies, the mere habit of writing to her about all the little events of my life, relieved me of much of their weight. You read her letters, and you ended by entreating me to set aside this confidant, and to accord to you her functions. I know not if she were, as you pretend, a false and evil friend; but she was certainly far beneath you, my dear and good Octave. Oh! how far was she, this Clémence, from having your gentleness and your sensibility! She terrified me, and you persuade me; she threatened me with inevitable evils, and you teach me how to preserve myself from them: for you have at least as much reason and judgment as she, and, moreover, you know how to speak to and to convince me. Since you have been here, and since I have accustomed myself to open my heart to you every moment, I find myself cured of many little moral maladies, and I have corrected many of the numerous defects which compromised and troubled my happiness. You have taught me to accept the sufferings of daily life, to tolerate the imperfections of love, not to demand what is impossible to the human heart; you have aided me to be just, and you have taught me to love Jacques as he must be loved in order to make him happy. My happiness and his own are then your work, O my dear friend! and I am so accustomed to have recourse to you in everything, that my felicity would be ruined if I should lose you: I should perhaps fall again into my old mistakes, and lose the fruit of your counsels. Remain, then, and never speak of going away. Our life will be even more beautiful than it has been hitherto. My chil-

dren will grow under your eyes, and we will rear them ; we will take the same care of their minds that we now take of their little persons. After them, and after Jacques, that which is dearest to me in the world is yourself ; for I love you still better than Sylvia, and yet I regard her and cherish her as my sister.

But your character is more nearly related to mine : I confide in you more easily, I feel much more attraction toward you ; at present, especially, it seems to me that we have received a new baptism, and that God would abandon us if we invoked him separately. Keep my bracelet, upon one condition : it is, that you will have Jacques' cipher replaced, without effacing your own ; let them both be interlaced with mine, and let your heart never separate me from him nor from yourself.

L X.

Jacques to Sylvia.

FROM THE FARM OF BLOSSE.

You asked me yesterday why I come so often to Blossse, and reproached me for having, for some time past, sought to be alone. It is true that I have never felt so urgently the need of solitude and reflection. This desert place, with its wild scenery, pleases me, and does me good. It seems as though a hand, inexorable, but paternal in its severity, drew me into the depths of these silent woods to teach me resignation. I have seated myself at the feet of these aged oaks, eaten into by the moss, and I here sum up my life. This calms me.

Do you not know what it is that troubles me ? Have you not perceived that Octave loves my wife ? This love has

been, for a long time, romantic and innocent, but it is growing violent, and if Fernande do not yet see it, she must see it before long. We have been imprudent in leaving them thus together—they are so young! But what could we have done? You could not have pretended to seek again a love which you had repulsed. Your pride would have refused to lend itself to anything that could have had the appearance of ignoble jealousy or of wounded vanity. As for me, it was still worse: I had at first accused these poor children unjustly; I felt that I had much reparation to make to them, and the fear of again deceiving myself forced me to close my eyes. I confess to you that, notwithstanding the evidence, I still hesitate to believe that Octave is in love with her. He seemed in the beginning to be so sure of himself, and all last year he was so happy with us! But since the winter, he has become more and more agitated and distracted; at present he is really sick with grief. He is an honest man; he has become reserved with me. He can not disguise the restraint and the trouble which I cause him; and yet he loves me sincerely. Yesterday evening, when I mounted my horse, he came to me, and told me of a journey to Geneva which he intended soon to take. I comprehended that he wished to absent himself from Fernande. I pressed his hand without speaking, and he threw himself into my arms, exclaiming, "Ah! my brave Jacques!" then he suddenly stopped, and began to speak to me about my horse. Poor Octave! he is unhappy, and it is through our fault: we have abandoned them too entirely to the perils of youth. But where would they not have had to encounter them? and where would they have combated with as much virtue? He will leave, I am sure: and perhaps, while I write, he is already gone. There was something extraordinary in the expression of his face, as though he had taken some resolution, painful but firm. That which induced me to come to the farm myself, was the great alteration which I observed at dinner in the expression of my wife's countenance: until

then, I had been convinced that she had not the slightest idea of Octave's love ; since that moment, I know not what to think. It is true that she has been for some time indisposed : the weaning of her children fatigues her, and the abundance of her milk often inconveniences her. I did not wish to observe her attentively ; I was afraid to do so ; whatever may have passed between them, from the moment that Octave had the courage to determine to leave, I could not embitter a day which was perhaps the last which he would ever spend with her. I am sure, now, of the reason and prudence of Fernande : she will send him away without offending him, and without irritating his passion by useless demonstrations of strength. I saw that it would be best for me to leave her to act, and that an implicit confidence on my part would be the best possible guaranty of their virtue.

I am not alarmed, but I am sad and profoundly weary of myself. I had a friend, sincere, amiable, devoted, and he must go away in despair because I am in the world. You had a beautiful life, intimate, smiling, and pure, as your hearts, and behold how it is spoiled, deranged, poisoned. because I am M. Jacques, the husband of Fernande ! I hope so little for myself and for my future, that I would rather die and leave you all happy, than preserve my happiness at the price of that of either of you. My happiness ! Can I possibly be happy henceforth, if Fernande have a profound regret in her heart ? And how can it be otherwise ? This is what caused me such consternation yesterday. Perhaps she loves him : if it be so, she herself is not yet aware of it ; but absence and grief will make her know it. And where would be the use of his going away, if she must weep for him, and hate me ?

No, she will not hate me, she is so kind and so gentle ! and I—I will be kind and gentle with her : but she will be unhappy—unhappy because of our indissoluble ties. I thought of this a good deal before we were married, and for some time past I have been thinking of it again : I shall see.

Do not speak to me ; tell me nothing, unless I question you. I fear lest at first you may not have given me too strong an assurance with regard to their friendship ; they were then pure—they are so still ; but they might then have separated very easily, and now their hearts will be broken. May God forgive us : we have done nothing with any evil or culpable intent. I will return to the château to-morrow. If Octave have not left, I will reflect upon what I ought, or what I shall be able to do.

L X I.

Octave to Fernande.

THIS month that we have just passed together has been a very strange one, my friend. Since the day in which you commanded me to stifle my love, I have so entirely covered it with ashes, that at times I almost believed I had succeeded in extinguishing it. I am more tranquil than I was in the winter, certainly ; but you should, from time to time, have taken a little more pains to reanimate that transport of enthusiasm which made me promise everything and sacrifice everything. Your heart seems to have abandoned me, and I fall into a sadness which every day becomes more profound. Do you fear that you will not find me docile to your lessons ? Why have you already withdrawn them from me ? Perhaps my melancholy annoys you ; perhaps you fear the weariness which my complaints might cause you. And yet it would have been so easy for you to have consoled me with a few words of confidence and compassion ! Do you not know your power over me ? when was it ever at fault ? You are sometimes cruel without being conscious of it, and you cause me horrible pain without deigning to perceive it.

Could you not, for example, hide from me a little of the love that you have for your husband ? Your soul is so generous and so delicate in everything besides ; but in this, you seem to manifest a sort of ostentation in making me suffer. Leave this vain parade to women who doubt themselves. You showed so much mind in the midst of your pity, during those first days ! you knew so well how to say to me things that could console me, or that could at least soften my pain ! When you spoke of your husband, without blaspheming a merit which no one appreciates better than I, without denying an affection of which I would not deprive him, you possessed the ineffable secret of persuading me that my part was as beautiful as his own, although different. Now, you have the useless and cruel talent to show me how magnificent is his part, and how ridiculous is mine. Could you not hide from me this jumble of children and cradles ? Do you understand me ? I do not know how to explain myself, and I am afraid lest I seem brutal, for I feel strangely soured to-day. In fine, you have had your children removed from your chamber, have you not ? Very good. You are young, you have senses : your husband has persecuted you to hasten this weaning. Very well ! so much the better ! you have done quite right : you look less beautiful this morning, and you seem to me less pure. I respected you in my thought, even to veneration ; and seeing you, so young, with your children in your arms, I compared you to the Virgin Mother, to the fair and chaste Madonna of Raphael, caressing her son and that of Elizabeth. In the most ardent transports of my passion, the sight of your ivory breast, distilling its pure nourishment on your daughter's lips, struck me with an unknown respect, and I would turn away my glance, dreading lest I should profane, by a selfish desire, one of the holiest mysteries of provident Nature. Now, be careful to hide your bosom : you are again a woman ; you are no longer a mother ; you have no longer any right to that artless respect which I felt yesterday, and which filled me with

piety and resignation, I feel more indifferent, and bolder. These are not the right means to take with a man as rustically candid as I am : you might very well have restored to your husband the right to enter at night into your chamber, without making it known to the whole house, and above all to me.

LXII.

Jacques to Sylvia.

FROM THE FARM OF BLOSSE.

I SHALL have to travel—I know not for how long a time—but it is necessary for me to go away; I am becoming antipathetic, and that is the worst thing in the world. Fernande loves Octave : this is now evident to me, beyond a doubt. Yesterday, when I persuaded her to consent to remove the children, whose cries keep her from sleeping, and make her really unwell, I know not whether you remarked the singular dispute that arose between Octave and her : “Are you sure that your children will be able to do without you a whole night?” said he. “They must be accustomed to do so,” she replied; “it is time to wean them.”—“They seem to me to be very young for that.”—“They will soon be a year old.”—“But they will not be well tended. To whom can a mother intrust the care of watching over her children at night?”—“I can intrust this care to Sylvia without any uneasiness.” He then made a gesture indicative of extreme impatience, and left without bidding any one good-night.

At first I did not comprehend the meaning of this conduct; but when I reflected upon it, it seemed to me very clear. I examined Fernande; for some time she was very pale! she

seemed to be sad rather than sick. I resolved to know what part I had to adopt, and I entered her chamber at midnight. Heaven is my witness that in causing the children to be taken away, I had not the intentions that Octave attributed to me. It is more than a year since I have slept with my wife upon my heart, and this would be for me to-day a joy as vivid and as pure as on the first day of our union, if this joy were reciprocal; but for a month I have been in doubt; and this month, during which, without causing her to be unfaithful to the sacred duties of maternity, I might have pressed her in my arms, has been to me one of perpetual anguish. She is gloomy and silent—have you remarked it, Sylvia? Octave is sad, and sometimes desperate. They struggle, they resist, the unfortunate ones! but they love and they suffer. In vain have I by turns entertained and repulsed the conviction of this reciprocal love: it has come to me more and more decidedly. Yesterday I determined to accept it, however painful it might be, and to appear odious for an instant, in order that I might never be in danger of seeming so again. I approached her bed, and saw that she was pretending to be asleep—hoping thus, the poor woman! to escape my importunities. I kissed her forehead: she opened her eyes, and held out her hand to me; but I thought I could see an almost imperceptible shudder of terror and repugnance. I spoke to her, as formerly, of my love: she called me her dear Jacques, her friend, and her guardian angel; but the name of love was forgotten; and when I sought to draw her lips to mine, her face assumed a singular expression of depression and of resignation. An angelic sweetness rested on her brow, and her glance had in it the serenity of a pure conscience, but her lips were pale and cold, and her arms languid. I thought the trial sufficiently severe; it would have been impossible for me to have found pleasure in tormenting her. I felt a horror of the right with which I am invested, and which she imagined me to be capable of using against her

will. I kissed her hands, and entreated her to tell me sincerely if she had any sorrow, if anything were wanting to her happiness. "How would it be possible for me not to be happy," she answered, "when you are occupied only in rendering life agreeable to me, and in removing from me the smallest annoyances? What sort of woman must one be to complain of you?"—"Whenever you wish to change your life," said I, "to live in another country, to be surrounded by a more numerous society, you know that you have only to speak the word, and I shall find my greatest joy in satisfying you; if it be weariness of our present life that makes you sick and melancholy, why do you not confess it to me?"—"No, it is not weariness," she answered with a sigh. And I saw that she was tempted to open her heart to me. She would certainly have done so, had her secret belonged only to herself; but she had no right to make to me another's confession. I aided her to enclose it in her own bosom, and left her, saying, "Remember that I am your father, and that I will carry you in my arms to keep you from treading upon thorns! Only tell me when you are tired of walking alone; and in whatever circumstances we may find ourselves, Fernande, never fear me."—"You are an angel! an angel!" she repeated several times; and her countenance thanked me, in spite of herself, for going away. I entered my room, and fell in utter desolation on my bed. I had crossed, for the last time, the threshold of her chamber.

It is all over, then, irrevocably: she loves me no more! Alas! had I not long known it, and did I need so decisive a proof to assure me of it? Has she not, for many months, loved Octave without knowing it? This peaceful affection which she now testifies toward me, is it anything more than friendship? She is happy with me now, and she begins to suffer through him; for love is, with her, a suffering. She is now a prey to all the terrors and to all the difficulties of social life. God knows how much of exaggerated

remorse is rending her soul ; but what ought I to do ? Shall I remove her from the danger, and try to make her forget Octave ? If I plunge her into the midst of society, impressive and ingenuous as she is, she will seek again to love, and she will make a bad choice ; for she is too superior to those parlor-dolls that are called women of the world, to take pleasure in their empty existence and in their imbecile pleasures. She might be astonished, stunned, for some time, and be diverted from her passion ; but ere long the need of loving, which is in her nature, would make itself felt all the more vividly, and love would again awaken in her heart, either for Octave, or for some other who would not be his equal, and who would ruin her. And then she would hate me, with reason, for having torn her from an affection which was still innocent, and which would perhaps have remained so always, and for having precipitated her into an abyss of deception and sorrow. But if I leave her here, some morning she will find herself a criminal in her own eyes : she will be drowned in tears, and will accuse me of having abandoned her to danger with a cowardly indifference, or with a stupid confidence. She will perhaps hate her lover for having made her suffer these agitations and this remorse : she will despise me for not having preserved her from them.

I am in as much uncertainty, and am as little prepared for this emergency, as though I had never foreseen what has happened. And yet, for nearly two years, I have been employed in examining every possible aspect of the future that is now accomplishing ; but there are a hundred thousand ways in which one may lose a woman's love, and the only one which we did not foresee is precisely the one which is realized by the event. It is absurd to prescribe to oneself a rule of conduct, when it is chance alone that enlightens one as to what would have been the best course to take. This is why societies can exist only by means of arbitrary laws, good for the masses, horrible and stupid for the individual.

How is it possible to create a code of virtue for men, when a man can not make such a code for himself, and when circumstances force him to reverse his judgment ten times in the course of his life? Last year, when I accused Fernande of deceiving me with effrontery, I was on the point of going away, of abandoning her without remorse and without compassion. What is it that changes so strangely my conduct and my disposition to-day? She loves Octave now, as I supposed that she loved him then; they are the same beings, these are the same places, and the social position is the same: but it is not the same sentiment. At that time, I thought her grossly amorous of a man; and now I see that she loves, trembling and against her will, a soul that comprehends her. Now, she is pale, she shudders, she weeps! This is all the external difference; but this difference is everything: it is the difference between a heartless woman and one who is noble and sincere. I can not now console myself by contempt. What has she done to lose my esteem? Nothing, in truth. And even should she abandon herself to the transports of her lover, she will only have yielded to the current of an inevitable destiny. She no longer loves me, and she is nineteen, and beautiful as an angel. It is neither her fault nor mine that I no longer inspire her with any other sentiment than friendship; can I ask of her greater sacrifices, more devotion and affection, than she shows in combating as she does? Can I require that her heart should dry up, and that her life should end with our love? I should be a fool and a monster if I could conceive one thought of anger against her. But I am horribly unhappy, for my love is still alive. She has done nothing to extinguish it; she has made me suffer, but she has neither offended nor degraded me. I am old, and I can not open my heart, like her, to a new love. The moment of suffering has come; there is no longer any hope of delaying or of avoiding it. At least I have one buckler against suffering, that no arrow can

pierce—silence. Be you also silent, my sister ! I console myself by writing to you, but let these thoughts never find utterance at our lips.

LXIII.

Fernande to Jacques.

My friend, since you do not return until to-morrow, I wish to write to you to-day, and to make to you a request that costs me a good deal ; but you spoke to me last evening with so much kindness and affection, that I am quite encouraged. You told me that if I felt at all weary of this country, you would take pleasure in procuring me any change that I might desire. I did not accept your offer immediately, because I knew not how to explain to you what I feel, and even now I hardly know how I can tell it to you. Weary ? with you, in so beautiful a place, with my children, and two friends like those whom we have, it is impossible that I should feel weary ; nothing is wanting to my happiness, O my dear Jacques ! and you are the best and the most perfect of friends and husbands. But what shall I say to you ? I am sad because I suffer, and I suffer without knowing why. I have gloomy thoughts, I do not sleep, everything agitates and fatigues me ; it may be that I have some disease of the nerves : I imagine that I am going to die, and that the air I breathe stifles and poisons me. In fact, I feel, not the desire, but the need of a change of scene. This is perhaps a fancy, but it is the fancy of one who is sick, and for which you will have compassion. Take me away from here for a time ; I think I shall be cured, and that before long I shall be able to return. You told me the other day that M. Borel had strongly urged you to purchase the

estate of M. Raoul, and you read me a letter in which Eugénie joined with him in entreating you to come and examine the property, and to bring me to pass the summer with her. I have a sort of vague wish to avail myself of the amusement of this journey, and to see those good friends. Persuade our dear Sylvia to accompany us : I could not separate myself from her without a grief that would be beyond my strength. Reply to me by the servant I send to you. Spare me the embarrassment of explaining myself any further upon a caprice which I feel to be ridiculous, but which I can not surmount. Treat me with the indulgence and the divine gentleness to which you have accustomed me. Good-by, my beloved Jacques. Our children are well.

LXIV.

Jacques to Fernande.

YOUR wishes are commands, my sweet little invalid : we will leave, we will go wherever you please ; make your preparations, and order our departure next week—to-morrow, if you will ; I have no affair in the world more important than the care of your health and comfort. I will write this very moment to Borel, and tell him that I accept his obliging proposition. It happens that just now I have funds to invest : it will be very agreeable to me to place them in Touraine, under the eyes of a friend who will oversee the rents. It would have been painful to me to undertake this journey without you ; I do not know, however, whether our Sylvia can accompany us. There are more difficulties and inconveniences, in the way of her doing so, than you think : I will speak to her, and if the thing be not absolutely impossible, you shall not be separated. We will

set out, then, for as long as you choose, my good and cherished daughter, but remember that if Cerisy do not please you, I shall be quite ready, were it the day after our arrival there, to take you elsewhere, or to bring you home again. Do not fear to appear fantastic ; I know that you are suffering, and I would give my life to lighten your pain. Adieu. A kiss from me to Sylvia, and a thousand to our children.

L X V.

Octave to Fernande.

AND so you are going away ! I have offended you, and you abandon me to despair, rather than hear the useless lamentations of an importunate friend. You are right, but this takes from you a good deal of your merit, in my eyes. You were much greater when you told me that you did not love me, but that you pitied me, and that you would bear with my presence as long as I needed your consolation and your support. At present you say nothing to me. I speak to you of my love in the delirium of fever, and you have the charity not to reply to me, in order not to drive me to desperation, apparently ; but you have not the patience to listen to me any longer, and you go away ! You have wearied too soon, Fernande, of the sublime part of which you had conceived the idea, but which you have not had the strength to fulfil. My love has not had time to cure itself, but it is soured, and the wound is more inflamed and more envenomed than before.

Your conduct is very prudent. I never should have thought you so ingenious : you have arranged everything in a moment, and have surmounted every obstacle with all the skill and coolness of the most experienced tactician.

This is very fine at your age ! Sylvia was rough and frank : she went away, leaving me a note, in which she told me, without ceremony, that she no longer loved me. You are more politic : you know how to profit by opportunities, and seize them on the wing ; you arrange everything in so knowing and so plausible a way, that one would swear it was your husband who is dragging you away, while his brave and generous heart hesitates, wonders, and submits, without knowing what is passing in your mind. Sylvia is but moderately pleased at the prospect of being quartered upon people with whom she is not acquainted, and who will perhaps treat her slightly enough ; but you make no account of anything. You load me, in their presence, with hypocritical testimonies of attachment and regret, and you so effectually avoid being alone with me, that, if I were not furious, I should be desperate. Be tranquil : I have as much pride as any one when I am irritated by contempt. You should have shown me yours the first day that I had the insolence to speak to you of love : I should at once have gone away, and you would long since have been rid of me. Why do you now take so much pains ? Why do you leave your home, and disarrange your whole family, when you have but to say the word, to send me back to Switzerland ? Do you suppose that I shall track your steps, and fatigue you with my pursuit ? You have chosen for your refuge the house of the Borels, thinking that it would be the only place in the world whither I should not venture to follow you. Mon Dieu ! this is taking altogether too much trouble : remain here, and live in peace ; I shall leave in quarter of an hour. Unpack your trunks ; tell your husband that you have changed your mind. I have seen you this morning for the last time in my life. Adieu, madame.

LXVI.

Fernande to Octave.

You are entirely mistaken as to the causes of my departure, and of my conduct toward you. I require of you to remain until to-morrow, unless indeed you wish to allow my husband to divine a secret which might compromise his happiness and my repose. This evening, at nine o'clock, we set out, after having shaken hands together. Go to the great elm: you will find under the stone my last letter, my last farewell.

FERNANDE TO OCTAVE.

Letter placed beneath the stone under the elm.

I go because I love you: to tell you so, and to resist the transports of your passion, would have been impossible. To go away without telling you, is equally beyond my strength. I am a weak and suffering being; I can not command my heart; I love my duties, and wish sincerely to fulfil them. I mean, by my duties, not merely what is dictated by the laws of society: society chastises severely those who disobey; but God is more indulgent, and he forgives. I could brave for your sake the ridicule and the blame which attach to the faults of a woman; but the happiness of Jacques is something that I can not immolate for you — a sacrifice which you yourself would refuse. Why is he not less perfect? why has he not been guilty of some wrong toward me, which would authorize me to dispose of my honor and my repose, as I should see fit? But, when his whole conduct is sublime, both toward me and toward yourself, what can we do? Submit, flee each other, and die of grief, rather than abuse

his confidence. I knew not when I began to love you. Perhaps it was on the day when I first saw you : perhaps Clémence was unhappily right in writing to me that, although I succeeded in deceiving my conscience, I was already lost when I believed myself to be laboring to effect your reconciliation with Sylvia. I can not now appreciate justly what has been passing in my poor head during the last year ; I am overcome with fatigue, combats, and emotions. It is time that I went away : I no longer know what I am doing ; I am as you were a month ago. Then I still felt that I was strong, or at least the fear of losing you gave me strength. What would I not have imagined, of what would I not have persuaded myself, what would I not have sworn to God and to men, rather than have renounced the sight of you ! This idea was too dreadful : I could not bear it ; but the victory that we flattered ourselves we should obtain, was beyond human strength ; scarcely did I see you at the point of enthusiasm and courage which I had urged you to attain, when my soul snapped asunder like a string too tensely drawn ; I fell into an inexplicable sadness, and when I emerged from this state to contemplate with admiration your devotion and your virtue, I felt that I must flee from you, or be lost with you. May God protect us ! The sacrifice is now consummated ; if I sink beneath its weight, remember me to pity me and to forgive me for all that I have made you suffer.

If you would do me a kindness, you will stay some days longer at Saint-Léon ; and as Sylvia has not been able to make up her mind to accompany me, profit by this holy friendship which Providence offers you as a consolation. She also is sad : I know not what it is that troubles her ; perhaps she sees that I am unhappy. She devotes herself to my children ; she will be a mother to them. Look at them, these poor children, whom also I abandon, leaving at once all that is dearest to me in the world : the sight of them will recall to you my duties and your own ; you will suffer less during these first days. If, instead of plunging yourself

into solitude, you nourish your soul with the testimony of our honest friendship, and with the sight of these scenes, where everything will speak to you of the grave and august duties of family and of honor, you will remember that you have been happy here through virtue, and will rejoice that you have not sullied the purity of this remembrance.

LXVII.

Sylvia to Jacques.

SAINT-LEON.

You did well to leave your children with me. This journey would have been very hurtful to your daughter, who is not well. Her indisposition will be nothing, I hope : it would have become serious in a carriage, deprived of the thousand little cares which are necessary to her. Do not speak to your wife of this indisposition, which will doubtless be cured when you receive my letter. The least sickness of your children is a great terror to me, above all now when I am alone. I tremble lest I should see their health impaired through my fault ; I do not leave them a minute, and I shall not have a moment's sleep until our dear little one is quite well.

I am happy to hear that you have had a safe journey, and have received so kind a welcome ; but I am grieved and alarmed at the terrible sadness in which you tell me that Fernande is plunged. Poor dear child ! Perhaps you did wrong in yielding so quickly to her desire ; she should have had more time for reflection and reconsideration. It seemed to me that, at the moment of setting out, she was in despair, and that, but for the fear of displeasing you, she would have given up this journey. I augur no good from this separa-

tion. Octave is like one crazed. I have succeeded in keeping him here until now, but I despair of calming him. I have tried to make him speak : I hoped that in opening his heart, and disclosing his grief to me, he would become calm, or would realize still more strongly the necessity of his being so ; but strength is not in Octave's organization. And even should I obtain a few noble promises, his resolutions would only be the enthusiasm of a few hours. I know him, and, seeing him so seriously in love with Fernande, I have at present little hope that he will second her generous projects. He is in a state of frightful agitation ; his suffering appears so lively and so profound, that I am quite moved with compassion for him, and I weep for him from the depths of my soul. Be indulgent and merciful, O my Jacques ! for they are greatly to be pitied. I have never been in such a situation, and really I know not what I should do in their place. My independent position, my isolation from all social considerations, from all family duties, have enabled me freely to follow the dictates of my heart whenever it has spoken. If I have strength, it has certainly not been acquired through combating ; for I have never had any need to do so. The idea of sacrificing a deep and real passion to this world which I hate, seems to me so horrible, that I do not believe myself capable of it. It is true that Fernande's only real duties are toward yourself : and your conduct imposes such upon all that love you, that those who betray you can not have another instant of happiness. Aid her gently, then, to accomplish this holocaust of her love : I will try to obtain something from Octave's virtue ; but he shuts his heart against me, and I can not overcome my reluctance to forcing the confidence of a soul that suffers, were it even in the hope of curing it.

LXVIII.

Octave to Herbert.

I AM in a deplorable situation, my dear Herbert : pity me and do not attempt to advise me : I am not in a state to listen to any one whomsoever. She has spoiled everything by telling me that she loves me ; until then, I thought myself despised : spite would have given me strength ; but, in leaving me, she tells me that she loves me, and she hopes that I shall resign myself to lose her ! No, this is impossible ; let them say what they will, these three strange beings among whom I have passed a year, that seems like a dream, like an excursion of my soul into an imaginary world ! What is the virtue of which they talk incessantly ? Does true strength consist in stifling the passions, or in satisfying them ? Did God give them to us that we might abjure them ? And is not he who feels them so vividly as to brave every duty, every misfortune, every remorse, every danger, bolder and stronger than he whose impulses are all governed and held in by prudence and reason ? What, then, is that fever that I feel in my brain ? What, then, is this fire that devours my breast, this boiling of my blood that impels and draws me toward Fernande ? Are these the sensations of a weak, a feeble being ? They think themselves strong because they are cold. Moreover, who knows the bottom of their thoughts ? who can guess their real intentions ? This Jacques, who abandons and gives me over to danger during a whole year, and who, notwithstanding his exquisite penetration in everything else, does not perceive that I am growing mad under his very eyes ; this Sylvia, who redoubles her affection for me, in proportion as I console myself for her disdain, and brave it by loving

another, are they sublime or imbecile? Are we dealing with cold reasoners who contemplate our sufferings with the tranquillity of philosophical analysis, and who will behold our defeat with the proud indifference of a selfish wisdom? or with heroes of mercy, with apostles of the morality of Christ, who accept the martyrdom of their affections and of their pride? Now that I have lost the magnet that attached me to them, I no longer comprehend them. I no longer know whether they mock me, forgive me, or deceive me. Perhaps they despise me; perhaps they exult in their ascendancy over Fernande, and in the facility with which they have separated me from her at the moment when she was about to be mine. Oh! if it were thus, wo betide them! Twenty times a day I am on the point of setting out for Touraine.

But this Sylvia stops me, and makes me hesitate. Curse her! She still exercises over me an influence which seems to have in it an irresistible fatality. You, who believe in magnetism, would have here a fine opportunity of explaining the power which she still has over me, after my love for her is extinguished, and although there is so little accordance or resemblance between our characters. When Fernande was here, I was so happy, so intoxicated, amid all my sufferings, that I believed everything she said. Sylvia was my friend, my beloved sister, as she was the friend and the beloved sister of Fernande. Now, she astonishes me, and inspires me with distrust. I can not believe that she is not my enemy, and the pity she shows me humiliates me as the most haughty testimony of contempt that a woman can give to an ancient lover. Ah! if I could confide in her, weep on her bosom, tell her what I suffer, and if I were sure she would compassionate me!

But to what would that lead me? She is the sister of Jacques, or, at least, he has in her so intimate a friend, that she could only blame or oppose our love. If even she were generous enough to desire to see me happy with another than herself, Fernande is precisely the only woman whom

she can not aid me to obtain. Ah ! if she despises me, she has good reason, for I am a man without character and without conviction. I feel that I am neither wicked, vicious, nor cowardly ; but I allow myself to be driven about by every wave that reaches me, by every wind that blows upon me. I have had in my life moments of insane and of holy exaltation, then frightful discouragements, then cruel doubts, and a profound contempt for the men and the things that had appeared to me sublime the day before. I loved Sylvia fervently : I thought I could raise myself to her, who seemed to me half hidden in the skies ; then I despised her even to suspecting her of being a courtesan ; then I esteemed her to such a point as to continue to be her friend, after having been repulsed as her lover ; now I fear her, and have a sort of hatred against her : and nevertheless, I can not yet tear myself from the place which she inhabits ; it seems to me that she has some word to say to me that will save me.

But why am I thus ? Why can I neither believe nor deny decidedly ? Oh ! I had one beautiful night with Fernande ! I shed at her feet tears that seemed to me to have descended from heaven ; but perhaps this was only a comedy that I played with myself, of which I was at once the inspired actor and the stupidly-admiring spectator ! Who knows, who can tell, what he is ? And what is the use of heating one's brain until the sparks come ? to what leads this exaltation that falls away of itself, like flame ? Fernande was sincere in her resolutions, in her confidence, the poor child ! and while vowing to Heaven that she would not love me, she loved me already in secret. She drags herself from the danger of telling me so, and she artlessly writes it to me ! Oh ! it is this that makes me love her ! it is this adorable weakness that places her heart on a level with mine. Her, at least, I have never doubted : I still feel as I felt the day in which I first saw her—that we were made for each other, and that her being is of the same nature with mine. Ah ! I never loved Sylvia ! it is impossible,

we resemble each other so little ! To press Fernande in my arms, would be to press a woman—the woman of my choice and of my love ! and they imagine I will ever relinquish this hope ? But what will come of it ? What is that to me ? If they make her unhappy, I will carry her off with her daughter, whom I adore, and we will go and live in the depths of some valley in my own country. You would willingly give me an asylum ? Ah ! do not lecture me, Herbert ; I know very well that I am making myself unhappy, and that I commit folly after folly. I know very well that if I had a profession, I should not be idle ; that if I were, like you, an engineer of bridges and causeways, I should not be in love ; but what would you have me do ? I am not fit for any trade ; I can not bend to any rule, to any constraint. Love intoxicates me, like wine ; if I could, like you, carry my two bottles of Rhenish without growing foolish, I might be able to pass a year between two charming women without falling in love with either of them. Adieu. Do not write to me, for I know not whither I am going. I pack my portmanteau twenty times a day : sometimes I determine to go to Geneva, and forget Fernande, Jacques, and Sylvia, and console myself with my gun and my dogs ; sometimes I determine to go and hide myself at Tours, in some inn, where I could write to Fernande and receive her replies ; sometimes I laugh with scorn at seeing myself so absurd, sometimes I weep with rage at being so unhappy.

LXIX.

Jacques to Sylvia.

WHAT you tell me of my daughter alarms me exceedingly ; it is the first time that she has been sick, and in the order of things, she might have been, and may be so, often ; but I can not control my uneasiness when my children are concerned, because they are twins, and their existence is therefore more precarious than that of others. The little girl is much more delicate than her brother, and this would seem to justify the general belief that one of the two always lives in the bosom of the mother at the expense of the other. If she become worse, write me without hesitation. I will at once rejoin you, not to aid your cares, which can only be perfect, but to lighten the terrible responsibility that weighs on you. I have hidden and shall continue to hide this news from Fernande, as long as I can : her health is really very much affected ; grief and uneasiness aggravate her sickness. She is surrounded here by cares, friendly attentions, and amusements ; but nothing relieves her. She is plunged in a sadness that dismays me, and her nerves are in a state of irritation that entirely changes her temper. You are right, Sylvia : this separation has done no good. There are but few souls who are organized so vigorously as to be able to uphold themselves in the calm of a strong resolve ; all honest consciences are capable of the generosity of a day, but almost all succumb the next morning under the effort of the sacrifice. I thought it my duty to consent to that of Fernande, and even to second it ; but this was not because I hoped from it any happy result for myself. When love is extinguished, nothing can rekindle it ; and in tearing myself from our Dauphiny, I certainly felt nothing of the im-

becile joy of a husband in whom vanity triumphs. Neither had I in my heart the imprudent hope of a lover who flatters himself with the prospect of finding his happiness in the immolation of the happiness of others. I well knew that Fernande would love Octave, when absent, with a more violent affection, and that I removed her only from a danger from which her modesty would perhaps have sufficed to preserve her. I knew that the arrow would bury itself in her heart in proportion as she endeavored to draw it out. Most men forget what they have felt, and pretend that they no longer know what love is, when what they thought they possessed is taken from them. And by what stupid arguments do they then try to prove that the woman who leaves them is guilty toward them! As for me, I should only accuse Fernande in case she received my caresses with a serene brow and a deceitful smile on her lips. But her conduct is noble: her sadness would protest against my tyranny, if I were gross enough to exercise it. In the sort of aversion which, in spite of herself, she manifests toward me at times, there is a violence of sincerity which I prefer to a hypocritical gentleness. Poor child! poor dear child! as you have said, she does what she can. In certain moments she throws herself, sobbing, on my bosom; in others, she repulses me with horror. Ah! what can she fear from me? I shall soon propose to her to return, if her state do not improve; for I do not wish her to be unhappy and to hate me. May every other sorrow, every other indignity, fall on me, rather than that! I will wait a few days longer; the excitement in which she now is will perhaps abate, like the violence of a disease. I did right in consenting to bring her here, even with the conviction that nothing would be gained by it; I did right in giving her the opportunity of making a noble effort, and of securing, for the rest of her life, the remembrance of a day of virtue: it will be one remorse the less for her future, one more claim to my respect. When she is weary of the combat, I will not raise my arm

to strike her down : I will offer it to her, that she may lean on it and repose. 'Alas ! if she but knew how much I love her ! But henceforth I am silent ; my love would be a reproach, and I respect her suffering. Insensate that I am ! there are instants in which I flatter myself that she is going to return to me, and that a miracle will be accomplished in her to recompense me for all the sorrows that I have borne in the course of my sad life !

L X X.

Sylvia to Jacques.

You must come to me : your daughter is falling into a state of marasmus, which gains ground alarmingly. Bring with you some physician more skilful than those we have here. If Fernande be really as sick and as sad as you say, hide from her the state of her child ; and yet, how shall we at last announce to her the truth, should my fears be justified ? Do what you judge to be most prudent. Will you leave her in this state at the Borels' without you ? Will they take good care of her ? It is true that her mother is about to come to Tilly, as he informs me, and that she can go to her house if she choose ; but from what you have told me of her mother, she would be but a bad friend and a poor support for Fernande. Ah ! why did we part ? It is that which has brought us misfortune. Octave has gone to Geneva ; he also has accomplished his sacrifice : what more can one demand of him ? I endeavored in vain to soften his grief by my friendship ; I am more than ever convinced that his soul is not great, and that the littlenesses of vanity or of selfishness, I know not which of the two, close it against elevated ideas and noble sentiments. Would you believe that for a long time he hesitated in doubt

as to whether I had the intention of discovering his secrets in order to make an unfriendly use of them, or whether I was sincere in my desire to reconcile him to himself? Would you believe that he had the ridiculous idea that I was coqueting with him in order to bring him back to my feet? He supposed me to have this mean and stupid self-love; he believed me occupied with these petty and despicable calculations, when my heart is crushed with Fernande's sorrow and his own, when I would give my life-blood to cure them if divided, or to send them to live happy in some world in which you had never set your foot, and in which their happiness could not mar your existence. Poor Octave! his greatest misfortune is to comprehend through the intelligence what greatness is, but to have a heart too cold or a character too weak to attain it. He thinks that Fernande is his equal, but he is mistaken: Fernande is far above him, and God grant that she may forget him, for Octave's love would perhaps only make her more unhappy. At last he has gone, swearing to me that he was going to Switzerland. Let us await the decree of destiny, and whatever it may be, let us devote ourselves to those who have not strength to devote themselves.

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LXXI.

Octave to *Fernande*.

YOUR husband is in Dauphiny and I am in Tours ; you love me, and I love you : this is all that I know. I will find some means of seeing and of speaking to you—do not doubt it. Do not try again to flee me, for I would follow you to the ends of the earth. Do not fear that I shall compromise you ; I will be prudent ; but do not reduce me to despair, and do not thwart, by a useless and foolish resistance, the means which I shall take to get at you without any one's suspecting it. What do you fear from me ? what dangers do you dread ? Do you think I desire a happiness that would cost you tears ? do you esteem me so little as to think I shall ask of you any sacrifice ? I wish only to see you, to tell you that I love you, and to decide you to return to Saint-Léon. There we will resume our former life : you will remain as pure as you now are, and I will be as unhappy as you please. I can promise everything, accept everything, provided I be not separated from you : that alone is impossible.

I have already made the tour of the château and gardens of Cerisy ; I have already gained over the gardener, and made friends with the dogs. This night, at two o'clock, I passed under your window : there was a light in your chamber. In the course of the day I will write you how we can see each other without the least danger. I know that you are sick, and if I must repeat the expression of those who speak of you, a secret grief is killing you. And you think that I will leave you, when your husband abandons you to go and harvest his hay, and philosophize with Sylvia, absorbed in the reckoning of his produce and rents ? Poor

Fernande ! your husband is a poor copy of M. de Wolmar ; but certainly Sylvia does not pique herself upon imitating the disinterestedness and delicacy of Clara. She is a cold and very eloquent coquette, nothing more. Cease to place these two beings of ice above everything else ; cease to sacrifice to them your happiness and mine : throw yourself into the arms of him who loves you ; take refuge in the only heart that has comprehended you. Impose upon me all the sacrifices that you choose, but let me weep once more at your feet ; let me tell you how much I love you, and let me hear these words from your lips.

LXXII.

Octave to Herbert.

I HAVE been at Tours a whole month, counting the day as patiently as I can, and awaiting the rare instants in which it is permitted me to see her. I lost a fortnight in asking and obtaining this favor. The imprudent one ! she knows not how much her resistance, her scruples, and her tears, attach me to her, and give force to my passion. Nothing irritates my desire, nothing rouses me from my natural indolence, like obstacles and refusals. I had enough to do to overcome her terror of being discovered and compromised : it kept me very busy. You say I have no employment. I assure you there is no profession more enslaving, or that requires more activity, than the endeavor to approach a woman whom the world and virtue undertake to guard. I had to fight against Madame de Luxeil (that Clémence of whom I once spoke to you), the most pedantic and the most unbearable of all the philosophers on the face of the earth, the dryest woman, the coldest, the most jealous of the hap-

piness of others. I had judged her perfectly from her letters. I had an opportunity of making a friend of mine at Tours speak of her—one who knows her very well, because she often goes there. [I have now ascertained that she is what is called a distinguished person : one of those beings who can neither love nor make themselves beloved, and who bestow their malediction upon those who love all over the earth ; female pedagogues, who have the sad advantage of seeing clearly the misfortune of others, and of predicting it with a malicious joy, in order to console themselves for being strangers alike to the blessings and the sorrows of the living ; mummies, who have sentences written on parchment in place of a heart, and who, for lack of affection and kindness, glory in displaying their fatal good sense and their un pitying reason.] Knowing that Fernande was at Cerisy, and that, according to the report of gossiping neighbors, she was dying of languor, she came to see her, and to feast upon her sadness, like a raven who awaits the last sigh of one who is dying on the field of battle. I do not know whether she has not even influenced Madame Borel (their mutual companion at the convent) against poor Fernande. Fernande finds that every one is cold toward her, and can not help regretting Saint-Léon. She shall return there ; I will decide her ; and there I will vanquish her scruples and mine ; yes, mine : for I confess to you, Herbert, I am the most miserable seducer that ever was seen. I am not a hero, either in virtue or in vice ; and this is perhaps the reason why I am weary, agitated, and unhappy, three fourths of the time. I love Fernande too much to renounce her : I would rather commit every crime, and endure every misfortune ; but this love is too true for me to be willing to persecute and frighten her by transports which she does not yet share. She must share them in time : God and nature will it. What barrier can oppose the love of two beings who understand each other, and whose burning aspirations call to and answer each other every hour ? I begin to conceive the

ecstatic joys of intellectual love between lovers who are young and full of life, who voluptuously retard the moment that shall give them to each other's arms, in order to prolong the embraces of their souls. Among those who are enslaved or powerless, this is a vain parade of abnegation, which is secretly expiated by spleen and misanthropy. I raise myself, then, into the regions of Platonism with Fernande, and wander there with her as much as she pleases. I am sure of descending again to earth, and of drawing her with me whenever I choose.

You will be astonished at the life I am leading ; I am also ; but, after all, this abandonment of myself to chance or to fate, this submission of my actions to my passions, is the only thing that suits me. I am truly a very boyish fellow ; I know it, at least I confess it : and perhaps among all whom I see, I am the only one who does not play a part. I let myself go, according to the bent of my nature, and I do not blush for it. Some wear a costume ; others paint themselves ; there are some who cover themselves with plastering, and wish to change themselves into majestic statues ; others, again, with the organization of a tortoise, would fain sport the wings of a butterfly. In general, the old try to be young, and the young affect the wisdom and the gravity of ripened age. As for me, I am everything that passes through my head, and in no way do I trouble myself about spectators. I lately heard two men describing themselves to each other. One called himself bilious and vindictive ; the other indolent and apathetic. When we separated, on quitting the coach, both had already revealed themselves. The one who pretended to be bilious had borne all sorts of provocations with the greatest coolness and apathy ; the other had been unable to support a very slight contradiction on a question of politics. There is among men so intense a craving after affectation, that they boast of defects which they have not, more willingly than of qualities which they possess. For myself, I run after the magnet that attracts me, and

neither turn my eyes to the right nor to the left to know what may be said of my proceedings. Sometimes I look at myself in the mirror, and laugh at myself, but I make no change in my way of living : that would give me too much trouble. With this disposition, I await, without too much either of weariness or of despair, what destiny may be going to make of me. I occupy my moments in the most peaceful way in the world : the thought of my love suffices to keep my mind warm, and to feed my hope. Shut up in my little room at the inn, cool and shady, I employ in drawing or in reading romances (you know that I have a passion for romances) the hottest hours of the day. Nobody knows me here, except two or three young men from Paris, who have no connexion with the Borels. Besides, the Borels know neither my name nor my face, and my stay here can not compromise Fernande with any one. Jacques always writes her that he is coming for her next week : but it is as clear as the daylight that he scarcely thinks of her, and that he is more occupied with the care of his estate than of his wife. It is true that it rests with her to order post-horses, get into her carriage with Rosette, and rejoin him at once. This is the step which I am trying to decide her to take, for I should then set out immediately for my hermitage, and should arrive there a few days after her—telling Jacques and Sylvia that I had been making a tour in Switzerland. Either they have no misgivings, or they choose to see nothing. This last opinion is the one to which I most willingly abandon myself : it does much toward appeasing the remnant of remorse that comes back to my mind, when Fernande, with her large eyes humid with love, and her large words of sacrifice and virtue, plunges me again into the uncertainties of desire and of timidity. I timid !—it is true, nevertheless. I would scale the walls of Babel, and brave all the guardians of beauty—eunuchs, dogs, and gamekeepers ; but a word from the woman I love brings me to my knees. Happily, the prayers of a lover are more imperious than the

menaces of the whole earth, and even than the terrors of conscience. I shall see Fernande this evening. She comes sometimes to the balls given by the officers of the garrison, with Madame Eugénie Borel. I get her to dance, without seeming to be acquainted with her; and, if it be but for one figure, I find means to say two or three words to her. Madame Borel has here a large old deserted house, which serves her as a stopping-place when she comes into town, the shutters and doors of which are opened but once a week. It would be easy to get in there, and have a meeting with Fernande. She is unwilling to let me any longer haunt the park of Cerisy. For my own part, I have a great liking for this sort of disguised courtship, but the coward is not of the same opinion.

LXXIII.

M. Borel to Jacques.

MY OLD COMRADE: Your daughter is dying: that is all very well; but your wife is being ruined, which is quite another thing. You can not prevent the one, but you ought to oppose the other. Therefore leave your children to some trustworthy person, and come and look after Madame Fernande. I would willingly take upon myself to carry her home, if you had given me the right to command her. But I had from you at parting only these words: "My friend, I confide to you my wife." I do not quite know what you, who are a philosopher, and whose ideas are so different from ours, may have intended by that; for I am an old soldier, and know only the code of the regiment. Now this, in my time, was the way things went, and, in my house, it is the way they still go. When a friend, a brother-in-arms, con-

fides to me his wife or his mistress, his sister or his daughter, I conceive myself to be invested with his rights, and charged with the following duties : First, to blow up or cane any impertinent person who addresses her with the evident intention of trespassing upon the honor of my friend, always being ready to give an explanation of my proceedings to the party who has been blown up or caned, if such be his mood. This first point shall be faithfully executed, you may depend on it, if the thief who is robbing your honor should fall into my hands ; but hitherto he has been as unseizable as the flame or the wind. Secondly, I conceive myself obliged, when my friend's wife is refractory or deaf to the good advice which I at first try to give her, to inform my friend, in order that he himself may take measures as to her conduct, for I have not the right to correct her as I would my own under similar circumstances. It is of this duty that I now acquit myself, my dear Jacques, with much grief and repugnance, as you may think ; but in fact it must be done. It is no small responsibility to preserve intact the virtue of a woman as young and as handsome as your wife. I have done my best, but I could not prevent their baffling me : a woman can hold out longer than a man in this respect. For me to have been silent, would have been to encourage the evil, and to lend my house to an intrigue in which my wife and I would have seemed to be accomplices. I therefore transmit to you the facts, such as they are ; you will make whatever use of them you think proper : One day, or rather one night, a fortnight ago, I heard some one going backward and forward under my window, at two o'clock in the morning. My large greyhound, who always sleeps at the foot of my bed, sprang howling toward the window, which was half open, and, to my great surprise, this was the only dog about the house that took the thing in bad part. All the others, though accustomed to do their duty, took no manner of notice, and I thought it must be some one belonging to the house. I called, I cried out, " Who's

there?" several times; nobody answered. I took a sword-cane and went out, but I found no one; and Madame Fernande, who was at her window, assured me she had seen nothing and heard nothing. That seemed to me singular and unlikely; but I said nothing about it, and kept on my guard the following nights. Two nights after, I heard distinctly the same steps, my greyhound made the same uproar, but I quieted him, and went down to the garden without making the least noise. I saw a man run off in one direction, and a woman, who was neither more nor less than your wife, run off in another. I did not let her see me at the moment; but the next morning, at breakfast, I tried to make her understand that I had perceived something: she did not choose to understand. However, the gallant did not return. At first, I intended to have a formal explanation with your wife, but mine prevented me: she had already undertaken it; and in order not to distress Fernande—as women understand better these little precautions—she told her that she alone had discovered her intrigue. Madame Fernande replied, with showers of tears, and attacks of nervousness, that she had in fact inspired a violent passion in a poor young madman, for whom she had no other sentiment than friendship, and that she had listened to him for a moment through compassion, in order to remove him from her for ever. I repeat to you the words which my wife, who also is not without a touch of romance in her own way, made use of in relating the fact to me. You will think what you please of this pretended friendship: for myself, I do not believe a word of it; but as Fernande swore to Eugénie that he was gone, at the least, to America—as for several days nothing further happened—I very willingly renounced the disagreeable task which to-day I have to fulfil.

The affair was at this point, when the colonel of the royal guard invited us to his balls. I am not over and above fond of these sparks of the new army, who wear red heels instead of scars, and foreign orders instead of our old cross; but,

after all, the colonel is an amiable man. Some of these gentlemen are old soldiers, that have been forced, for the sake of getting a living, to turn their jacket; they drink good wine at their suppers, and they play high. You know that I am no saint; my wife is always ready for a dance. After grumbling a little, I consented to put her into her calèche, take the reins, and escort her to Tours with Madame Fernande, who declared herself much better, and Madame Clémence, that conceited person whom I do not much like, and who, God be thanked! took leave of us when we arrived in town. Your wife had made herself as beautiful as an angel to go to this ball; and really one would not have thought, to look at her, that she was as sick as she says she is. I went off with those who did not dance, and left these ladies with those whose feet had not been frozen in Russia; I merely recommended Eugénie to watch her companion pretty closely, and to inform me immediately if she danced much or talked often with any one. I came back myself three or four times to give a look at their way of going on. Everything passed off safely in appearance; and unless my wife be leagued with her, of which I believe her incapable, the cavalier must have been very adroit, and less *crazed* than Fernande had pictured him. She must also have had a very good understanding with him to have been able to keep me from finding him out: for it is impossible to imagine which it was, of all who danced with her at two balls, that arranged with her the measures which she has so well executed. I continue my recital.

On the morning after the last ball, when we were on our way back to Cerisy, she told us she had forgotten some little purchase, and that she should amuse herself by mounting on horseback one of these days to go after it. I replied to her that at the day and hour that she should choose, I should be ready to accompany her with my wife, or without my wife, if this last were otherwise engaged. I proposed to her the next day, or the day after. She told me that this would de-

pend on the state of her health, and that she would inform me the first day that she felt well. The next day, toward noon, not seeing her come down to the saloon, I feared she might be worse than usual, and sent to know how she was ; but her waiting-maid gave us to understand that she had gone out at six o'clock in the morning, on horseback, followed by a servant. That surprised me a little, and I went to the stable to make inquiries. I knew that Eugénie's mare, and the other little beast that your wife usually rides, were gone to the farrier's, two leagues from here. Fernande had therefore been obliged to mount my horse, which is much too powerful for a woman as cowardly as she : this seemed to me to betray a singular hurry to go to Tours, and threw me into a double uneasiness. I feared lest she might break her neck ; and, my faith ! this would not have been half as bad as the rest. I went to the park-gate to wait for her, and very soon I saw her arrive at a triple gallop, covered with sweat and dust. She was a good deal disconcerted at seeing me : she had hoped, no doubt, to enter the house, and get rid of the accoutrements of this forced march, without being observed ; but she took courage, and said to me, with a good deal of self-possession, " Do you not think me quite an early riser, and quite brave ? " — " Yes," said I, " I must compliment you upon having changed in this respect since Jacques' departure. " — " And you see how well I manage your horse," she added, pretending not to understand me. " I feel really well to-day : I rose with the day, and, seeing such fine weather, I could not resist my fancy to go on this expedition. " — " It was very prettily done on your part," I replied ; " but does Jacques let you scour the country in this way all alone ? " — " Jacques lets me do whatever I please," she replied, rather dryly : and she set off at a gallop, without adding another word. I tried to make my wife lecture her : but women uphold one another like thieves. I do not know what passed between them. Eugénie entreated me not to meddle in this affair, and want-

ed to prove to me that I had no right to lecture a person who was neither my sister nor my daughter; that my inuendoes were brutal, and wounded Fernande, which was contrary to the consideration we owed to her isolation and the duties of hospitality. What could I do? She argued so well with me, that I was silent again, and your wife returned to Tours in the same fashion two days after—that is to say, yesterday. What could I say to prevent her from doing so, after all? And what was there to hinder her from answering me that she was going simply to buy gloves and white stockings? Eugénie thought so, or pretended to think so. Now for the sequel.

You know, as well as I, that in provincial towns everything is remarked upon, everything interpreted, and everything discovered. Your wife's pretty face had made too great a sensation at the balls, for the officers of the garrison not to have sought to pay their court to her; and as there are no better prudes than the women who have some little secret to hide, they were all repulsed with loss. They saw her pass the first morning, and followed her at a distance as far as our town-house, as my wife calls her stopping-place; they saw her go in and come out, observed the time she stayed there, made inquiries, knew that there was no one in the house, and wondered, very naturally, whether it was to sleep, or to say her prayers, that she came and shut herself up there for a couple of hours. Idle as officers in garrison always are, malicious as true sub-lieutenants, five or six of them made search so successfully, that they discovered a certain outlet at the back of the premises, through which, some time after Fernande had left, went out a young man whom they did not know by name, but who had been seen for some time at the Golden-Ball inn. Yesterday, when poor Fernande returned to the rendezvous, they waited until the gallant had entered on his side, and then cut off his retreat without his perceiving it; they then mounted guard round the house, and let Fernande go out without alarm-

ing her by any hostile demonstration : these gentlemen are all men of good family, and too well-brought up to address a lady on such an occasion. In my time, we should not have been so respectful : but new times, new manners, happily for your wife. These gentlemen had no spite except against the happy rival whom she preferred to themselves. She mounted her horse in the court, after having taken the key of the hall-door, which she had asked of my wife under pretext of wishing to take a moment's rest in the saloon while her horse was bridled for returning : she put the key into her pocket, not without having well barricaded her lover, that his retreat might not be disturbed by any inquisitive person, and the servant who accompanied her, and who may or may not have been in the secret, carried off in like manner the key of the court. Fernande set out in the midst of a hedge of spectators, who pretended to be smoking their pipes and talking of their own affairs, but who placed themselves immediately afterward in ambush under the garret-window by which the lover had entered from a neighboring house. They watched with great pleasure the useless efforts he made to get out ; kept him some time a prisoner ; and had determined, it is said, to force him to come to a parley and to answer certain questions, after which they would have set him at liberty. He remained mute to all their calls, to all their banterings, and kept all day as still as though he had been dead. The good-for-nothing besiegers then determined that they would take him by famine, and that they would mount guard all night : they posted sentinels round the house, and renewed them every hour, as though on military duty ; but the captive, in desperation, made a sally which they had not expected, and escaped by the roofs in a way that is said to have been a miracle of boldness and luck. They saw him pass like a shadow through the air, but they could not catch him ; and this morning he has left town, without any one's knowing which road he took. Your old comrade Lorrain, who is now

captain in the cavalry, came to dine with us, and related to me the whole affair, not without a certain pleasure, for he has no infinite love for you. I went up stairs to your wife as soon as he was gone ; she had given out that she was sick, and had not left her room all day. We had quite a scene : I raised all the devils, and she was as angry as a little demon. Instead of entreating me to say nothing, she defied me to inform you of her conduct, and declared to me that I had no right to talk to her in that way ; that I was a *clown*, and that she would not bear even from yourself the reproaches that I brought against her. If it be thus, do as you choose : I wash my hands of the affair ; but my conscience commands me to inform you of the facts.

She drove me from her chamber, and wanted to send at once for post-horses, to leave a house in which she said she was insulted and oppressed. Eugénie exerted herself to the utmost to calm her, and an attack of nervousness, which this time is, I believe, very real, came to end the quarrel. She is now in bed, and Eugénie will pass the night with her. As for me, I hasten to write you, because I fear lest to-morrow the strength and the will to go away may come back to her, and I can not let her go away in this manner all alone with that little waiting-maid, who looks to me, by way of parenthesis, very sly and very corrupt. I will do my best to persuade her to wait for you ; but, for Heaven's sake, take me quickly out of this embarrassment. Do not blame me, for you see that I have tried to act for the best, and that I am not responsible for anything that may happen henceforth : if she choose to leave, to commit some folly, to let herself be carried off, what can I do ? can I put her under lock and key ? I do not hide from you that her head is turned : in the indignation which she excited in me by her resistance to my advice, I could not help saying that she would do better to go and take care of her daughter, who was dying, than to be engrossed by an extravagant love-affair, which had already drawn upon her the laughter of a

whole province and of a whole regiment. I was sorry, the moment after, for having betrayed the secret you had desired me to keep, for she fell into convulsions that proved to me that this news caused her great pain, and that she has not forgotten maternal love. I end by entreating you to be indulgent toward her. I know your coolness, and I count upon the prudence of your conduct; but join to these a little pity for this poor wanderer. She is very young; it may be that she will come to her senses and repent. There are very good mothers of families who have had their days of error. She has, I think, a good heart; at least, before her marriage, she was charming. I no longer recognised her when you brought her back with caprices, convulsions, and violences, of which formerly I could never have believed her capable. You have seemed to me to be a very indulgent husband; this I do not hide from you: you see what it is to be too much in love with one's wife. Others say that you also have some errors to reproach yourself with, and that you live down yonder in a rather too tender intimacy with a sort of relation who came to you after your marriage, no one knows whence. I know very well that when a wife is pregnant or nursing, one is excusable for having some fancies; but these should not go on under the conjugal roof: it is a great imprudence, and you see how they revenge themselves. Do not be angry at what I say to you: this was the talk of a travelling clerk, who, hearing Fernande's adventure related in a coffeehouse this morning, said that you had in part deserved your fate; perhaps it is a lie. However it may be, come, were it only to discover your rival's retreat, and to treat him as he deserves: I will help you. I close my letter; it is midnight. Your wife has just fallen asleep: that is to say, she is better. I will make my apologies to her to-morrow.

LXXIV.

Fernande to Octave.

TILLY, near Tours.

I AM at my mother's; offended and almost insulted by M. Borel, I have come to take refuge, not in the bosom of a protectress or a friend, but beneath the roof of one whose reproofs, however harsh they may be, will not be a usurpation of power. I can bear from her mouth many words that revolted me from that of this coarse and brutal soldier. I set out to-morrow for Saint-Léon; my mother will take me there. She knows of our miserable adventure—who does not?—but she has been less cruel toward me than I expected. She throws all the blame on my husband, and, notwithstanding all I can say, persists in believing that Sylvia is his mistress, and that he abandons me for the sake of living with her. I know not who has spread through the country this infamous lie: every one receives it with the eagerness with which the world always believes what is evil. Alas! it was not enough, then, that I should make him ridiculous through my folly—I can not prevent them from slandering him! His kindness, his confidence toward me, will all be attributed to odious motives. I am sure that Rosette betrays us and sells our secrets: I met her just now as she came out of my mother's room, and she seemed quite troubled at seeing me. An instant afterward, my mother came to me to talk about my household, my imprudent love: and I saw that she was informed of the smallest details of our history: but informed in what a way! Facts passing through the mouth of this servant, had been soiled and distorted, as you may imagine: our first meetings at the great elm, when I thought that I was yielding myself to a sentiment

so pure and so little dangerous, have been represented as a bold intrigue ; the welcome which Jacques then gave you has been treated as an infamous complaisance ; and our double friendship, long so peaceful, and always so pure, is condemned, without appeal, as a double affair of gallantry.

What can I answer to such accusations ? I have not the strength to fight against so deplorable a destiny ; I allow myself to be overwhelmed, humiliated, soiled. I think of my child who is dying, and whom I shall perhaps find dead three days hence. It seems as though Heaven were angry with me : I have, then, committed a great crime in loving you ? Your letter has done me as much good as I am capable of receiving ; but what can you repair hereafter ? I know that you suffer from my misfortunes as much as I do ; I know that you would give your life to preserve me from them ; but it is too late. I will not reproach you ; I am lost : what would be the use of my complaining ?

I know not how your letter reached me ; but I see, from the means you indicate for receiving my reply, that you are not far from here, and that you come almost into the house. Octave ! Octave ! you are fatal to me ; you have undone me by the conduct in which you obstinately persevere. What is the use of this solicitude and this passionate pursuit, which expose your life, and ruin my happiness ? Why will you thus dispute me with a society that laughs at our efforts, and to whom our affection is a subject for scandal and jesting ? Under whatever disguise and with whatever precaution you approach me, you will be again discovered. The house is small, I am constantly watched, and Rosette knows you ; you see to what the help and devotion of these people lead : for a louis they second you, for two they sell you. What would be the use of your seeing me ? you can do nothing for me. My husband must know everything, and I must obtain his forgiveness. This will not be difficult : I know Jacques too well to fear any unkindness from him ; but his esteem will be withdrawn from me for ever ; he will no

longer feel for me anything but compassion, and his kindness will humiliate me as a perpetual reproach. For yourself, if you persist in seeing me again, you will perhaps pay for this obstinacy with your life ; for Jacques will waken at last from the sleep into which his confidence has plunged his pride. I can not prevent you from seeking the fulfilment of your fatal destiny : you can increase the evil you have done me, only by finding your death in the consequences of our love. Well ! be it so. All that can hasten my own will be a blessing from God : let him take my daughter from me, let him strike you, I will soon follow you.

L X X V.

Octave to Fernande.

I HAVE ruined you, you are in despair, and you think that I will desert you ? You think I can give a thought to the dangers to which my life may be exposed, when yours is compromised and made desolate through my fault ? Do you take me for a coward ? Ah ! it is quite enough to be a fool whom God curses, whose hopes are all thwarted, and whose enterprises are all crossed by fatality. But no matter : this is not the moment for complaint and discouragement ; remember that I can not now compromise you any further ; the evil is done : nothing can ever console me for it, and my heart will bleed eternally for my fault. But if we can not repair the past, at least the future belongs to us, and I can not support the idea that it must be for you an implacable and eternal punishment. Poor unfortunate one ! God can not will that you should resign yourself to suffer through a whole lifetime for a fault that you have not committed : if he wish to punish, he must begin with me ; but no, God is

indulgent, and protects those whom the world abandons. He will preserve you—in what way, he only knows ; at least he will restore to you your daughter. That miserable Borel has no doubt exaggerated her sickness, to revenge himself for the just pride with which you repulsed his insolent reprimands. When I left Saint-Léon, she was very slightly indisposed, and her constitution promised a degree of strength capable of withstanding the inevitable sicknesses of infancy. You will find her cured, or at least she will be cured by sleeping again upon your bosom. All this evil has come, to her as well as to us, from your departure. We were a happy family, believing in one another, and one life seemed to animate us all ; you chose to break up this harmony that Heaven had ordained. You were drawn to my arms : Jacques would not have known, or would have tolerated it, and Sylvia would not have dared to take offence at it. Now, the world has spoken, it has uttered its hideous malediction on our love, and it must be washed out with blood. Let it be done : I will offer mine to Jacques to the last drop. Do you not know that I should be the meanest of cowards if I acted otherwise ? If he will be appeased by taking my life, and will restore you to happiness, I shall die consoled and purified from my crime ; but if he maltreat you, if he threaten you, if he even humiliate you, wo to him ! I have drawn you into the abyss—I shall be able to draw you out of it. Do you imagine that I trouble myself about the world ? Formerly I believed it to be a severe but just master : I broke with it the day it forbade me to love you. Now, I brave its anathemas ; I will take you in my arms and will bear you to the ends of the earth. I will carry off your children, your daughter at least, along with you, and we will live in the depths of some solitude, where the insensate clamors of society will not reach us. I have not, like Jacques, a great fortune to offer you ; but all I possess shall be yours : I will clothe myself as a peasant, and will labor, that your daughter may have a silken dress, and that you may have

nothing to do but play with her. The fate I offer you will be less brilliant than that which you now enjoy ; but it will prove more love and devotion to you than all the gifts of your husband. Raise your courage, then, and hasten your return to Saint-Léon. If I did not fear that it would increase his anger, I would come for you this evening in a post-chaise, and would take you myself to your husband ; but he would perhaps think, at the first moment, that I came to brave him, and such is not my intention. I will offer myself to him, and will give him any reparation that he shall choose. He would despise me with reason if I should flee at such a moment. I entered your mother's little garden this morning, and saw her in deep confabulation with Rosette : get rid of that girl as soon as possible. I saw you also—in what a state of paleness and depression ! I felt all the tortures of remorse and of despair. I was dressed as a peasant, and it was I who sold to your servant the flowers in which you must have found my first note. I shall bring this one to you myself this evening, and shall take this journey two steps behind you. Take courage, Fernande : I love you with all the force of my soul ; the more unhappy we may be, the better I shall love you.

LXXVI.

Octave to Herbert.

I HAVE many things to relate to you. I set out to return to Dauphiny on the evening of the fifteenth, with Fernande and Madame de Theursan. The mother was very far from suspecting that one of the two postillions who attended her was no other than the lover from whom she flattered herself she was carrying off her daughter. This Madame de Theursan, though in other things a wicked woman, is prudent, and a friend to wise and skilful measures; she had, in the course of the day, dismissed Rosette, and had sent her to Paris with a considerable sum and a letter of recommendation to a person who will get her a good place. I saw the girl at an inn in a neighboring village where she was to take the coach; I longed to horsewhip her, but I thought that for the sake of Fernande's interests I ought to do quite the contrary. I therefore doubled Madame de Theursan's present, and saw her off for Paris. There, at least, the malice of her tongue will be lost in the loud storm of voices that hover over the abyss wherein all is swallowed up pell-mell, errors and blame. At the moment of Fernande's departure, I saw with pleasure that Madame Berel lavished upon her testimonies of friendship that must have been some consolation to her wounded heart. At the first relay, after exchanging a glance, a shake of the hand, and a note with Fernande, at the door of the carriage, I quitted my costume, and posted on horseback all night behind her carriage; at each relay I approached her, and I could see, by the glimmer of some mysterious lantern, a little hope and pleasure in her eyes. In the morning, while she was breakfasting at an inn, I hired a chaise and continued my journey. By-the-way, send

me some money at once : for if I have any fresh expedition to undertake, I shall not know how to get along.

Madame de Theursan had remarked my face upon the road ; but she had never seen me, and as I looked like some travelling trader—one of so little interest either to her or her daughter—she could not guess my design. I stopped on the road, at the entrance of the valley of Saint-Léon, and allowed her to advance into the plain. I then sent my equipage to the parsonage, telling the postillion to go slowly ; and, in half an hour, by the hill-road, I arrived, across the wood, at the château. I entered, without seeing any one, and seated myself in the saloon behind the screen where the children are sometimes brought during the day. There was one empty cradle there—one only : my heart ached ; I inferred that the little girl was dead, and I shed bitter tears at the thought of the additional sorrow that awaited my unfortunate Fernande.

I had been there quarter of an hour, absorbed and overwhelmed by this combination of implacable misfortunes, when I heard the steps of several persons : it was Jacques, with Fernande and her mother, who had just arrived. "Where is my daughter?" said Fernande to her husband ; "let me see my daughter!" The tone of her voice was heart-rending. That of Jacques seemed strangely cruel as he replied to her with another question—"Where is Octave?" I rose at once and presented myself, saying in a resolute tone, "I am here." He remained motionless for a few moments, and looked at Madame de Theursan, whose face expressed the surprise that you may imagine. Jacques then held out his hand to me, saying, "*It is well.*" This was the first and last explanation we had together.

Fernande was divided between her anxiety to know what had become of her daughter, and that of seeing Jacques' behavior toward me. Pale and trembling, she fell into a chair, saying, in a stifled voice, "Jacques, tell me that my daughter is dead, and that you have received a letter from

M. Borel."—"I have received no letter," replied Jacques ; "and your arrival is to me an unexpected happiness." He made this answer with so much calmness, that Fernande was quite deceived. I myself should have been taken in, had I not known, through Rosette, who was in possession of all the secrets of Cerisy, that M. Borel had written, and had related everything. Fernande arose eagerly, and a gleam of joy shone over her face ; but she fell back into her chair, saying, "My daughter is dead, at least !"—"I see," said Jacques, bending toward her affectionately, "that Borel must have had the imprudence to disclose to you the motives that have kept me away from you. It is a sad justification that I have to offer you, my poor Fernande ; but you will accept it, and we will weep together." At this moment Sylvia entered with the little boy in her arms : she ran to place him in those of the unfortunate mother, covering her with kisses and tears. "*Alone !*" said Fernande, embracing her son, and she fainted.

"Monsieur," then exclaimed madame de Theursan, taking Jacques' arm, "leave my daughter to the cares of the two persons whom I have the surprise of seeing here, and give me at once a moment's conversation in another room."—"No, madame," replied Jacques, in a dry, haughty tone ; "let me assist my wife myself : afterward, you will say to me all that you wish to say, before these two persons here present. Fernande," said he, addressing his wife, who began to come to herself a little, "take courage : it is all I ask of you in recompense for the unalterable tenderness which I feel for you. Take care of yourself, preserve yourself for this child that remains to us ; see how he smiles on you, our poor only son ! You must cling to life ; you are still surrounded by beings who cherish you : Sylvia is only awaiting an effort from your friendship to return her caresses ; I am at your feet to conjure you to resist your grief . . . and . . . here is Octave." He pronounced these last words with a visible effort. Fernande threw herself into his arms, occupied

only with her own sorrow. Upon his face were two large tears, and he looked at me with a singular mixture of reproach and of pardon. Strange man ! for a moment I longed to throw myself at his feet. We passed nearly an hour in tears. Jacques was so kind and so delicate toward his wife, that she felt reassured with regard at least to one of the two misfortunes she had dreaded : she thought he knew nothing as yet, and took courage so far as to hold out her hand to me—to me the last, after having given a thousand testimonies of her love to her son, to her husband, and to Sylvia. “ You see,” said I to her in a low voice, during a moment in which I found myself alone by her side, “ that all the blows do not fall in the same instant, and that I am still at your feet.” I encountered the eyes of Madame de Theursan, who looked at me with indignation ; Jacques came in again with Sylvia : they prevailed on Fernande to take a little nourishment, and we conducted her to the table. The repast was sad and silent ; but our cares recalled Fernande gradually to life. No one spoke to Madame de Theursan, who appeared to be quite insensible to the unhappiness of her child, and who did nothing but look alternately at Sylvia and me, thanking us, with an affectation of ironical politeness, for the rare attentions we bestowed on her daughter. Jacques, on his side, affected to take no notice of her. When we returned to the saloon, Madame de Theursan, addressing herself to Jacques, said to him in an insolent tone, “ And so, monsieur, you refuse to give me a private explanation ? ” — “ Absolutely, madame,” replied Jacques. “ Fernande,” said she, “ you hear how your mother is treated in your house : I came here to defend and protect you ; it was my intention to reconcile you, as far as possible, with your husband, and to make use of politeness and reason to induce him to abjure his errors in forgiving yours. But I am insulted, even before I have said a word in your favor. It is for you to say how you wish me to act henceforward.” — “ I entreat you, mamma,” said Fernande, confused and terrified, “ to put off until an-

other time all explanations whatsoever."—"Do you think, Fernande," said Jacques to her, "that we shall ever need any mediator to help us understand each other? Did you request your mother to come here to protect and defend you against me?"—"No, no, never!" exclaimed Fernande, hiding her head in Jacques' bosom; "do not believe it! all this has happened against my will; do not listen, do not reply. . . . My mother, have pity on me, and say nothing."—"To be silent, would be a baseness," replied Madame de Theursan, "if what I have to say could be of any use; but I see that it would only be taking useless trouble. If every one here is satisfied, I have nothing to do but to withdraw. But remember, Fernande, that we see each other for the last time: the shameful life from which I hoped to withdraw you, and into which you are about to plunge yourself more deeply than ever, forbids me to acknowledge any relationship with you hereafter. I should appear, in the eyes of the world, to approve the scandalousness of your conduct, and to imitate the shameful compliance of your husband." Fernande, paler than death, fell upon the sofa, exclaiming, "My God! spare me!" Jacques was as pale as she, but his anger was revealed only by a little knitting of the eyebrows that Fernande has taught me to observe, and of which Madame de Theursan was far from comprehending the importance. "Madame," said he, in a voice very slightly altered, "no one in the world, besides myself, has any rights over my wife: you renounced yours when you married her. I forbid you, therefore, in the name of my authority and of my affection for her, to address her with reproaches and insults, which, in the state in which you see her, may be fatal to her. I well knew that, for the pleasure of offending me, you would not hesitate to risk your daughter's life; but if you have anything against me, speak—I have wherewith to reply to you: it will be sufficient for me to tell you that I know you." Madame de Theursan changed countenance; but anger prevailing over the fear which this sort of threat

seemed to cause her, she rose, took Fernande by the arm, and pulling her roughly toward her, throw her almost on my knees, saying, "If such be your choice, Fernande, remain in the bosom of the shame into which your husband has precipitated you; it is not in my power to raise a degraded soul. As to you, mademoiselle," said she to Sylvia, "I compliment you upon the part you are playing here, and I admire the skill with which you have furnished a lover to your rival, in order the more easily to supplant her with her husband. I now withdraw: I have fulfilled the duty that was imposed on me, by offering to my daughter the support which she should have implored, and which she has repulsed. May God forgive her, for I curse her!" Fernande uttered a cry of horror. I pressed her involuntarily to my heart. Sylvia said to Madame de Theursan, with freezing disdain, that she comprehended nothing of her apostrophe, and that she did not reply to enigmas. "I will explain this one to you," said Jacques with bitterness; "madame has no fortune, and she knows that I have settled on her daughter a dowry, which, in case of widowhood or separation, would insure to her a brilliant existence; she seeks to embroil us, in order that her daughter, in going to live under her guardianship, may give her the control of fifty thousand pounds a year: this is the whole of the enigma." Madame de Theursan was green with fury; but hatred having untied her tongue, she loaded Jacques and Sylvia with such cutting insults, that Jacques lost all patience, and frowned in earnest; he then opened his pocket-book, and showed to Madame de Theursan a few words written on a small piece of paper, with a picture cut in two, exclaiming in a loud voice, "*Do you know that?*" In her rage, she made a movement to seize it, replying wildly that she did not know what it meant; but Jacques, repelling her, went to Sylvia, and took from her neck a sort of scapulary which she always wears. He tore open the little bag of black satin, and drew out of it another half of a picture,

which he showed to Madame de Theursan, and repeated in the same thundering voice, which I had never before heard from him—“*And that, do you know it?*” The unhappy woman nearly fainted with shame; but recovering herself, she cried out with the desperation of hatred, “She is none the less your mistress, for you know very well that she is not your sister!”—“She is not your sister, Jacques?” said Fernande, who, comprehending this strange scene no better than we, had approached her mother in order to assist her. “No, she is his mistress,” cried Madame de Theursan wildly, endeavoring to drag away her daughter. “Let us flee from this house: it is a place of prostitution; let us go, Fernande; you can remain no longer under the same roof with your husband’s mistress.” Poor Fernande, crushed beneath the weight of so many emotions, and stunned as it were by so many surprises, remained undecided and dismayed; while her mother shook her, and pulled her toward the door, in a sort of delirium. Jacques rescued her from this torture, and, leading her to Sylvia—“If she be not my sister,” said he to her, “at least she is yours: embrace her, and forget your mother, who has ruined herself through her own fault.”

Madame de Theursan fell into frightful convulsions. She was carried into her daughter’s chamber; but as Sylvia was about to follow Fernande, who had gone out to take care of her mother, she stopped between Jacques and me, and, taking us each by an arm—“Jacques,” said she, “you have gone too far, and you should not have said that before Fernande and before me. I am very sorry to know that this is my mother: I had hoped that she, who had abandoned me in giving me birth, was dead. Happily, Fernande has comprehended nothing of this scene, and it will be easy to make her believe that, in calling me her sister, you simply made an appeal to my friendship. Let her think of it what she may, it is not for any one here to explain to her these unhappy secrets. Octave will keep them religiously.”—

"All the more willingly," said I, "that I know nothing about them, and that I have divined no more than Fernande." We separated, and Sylvia passed the rest of the day in Madame de Theursan's room. Fernande, sick herself, had been obliged to go to bed as soon as she had seen her mother somewhat calmed. Sylvia tended them alternately with an admirable zeal. After all, Sylvia is a grand and noble creature. I know not what passed between her and Madame de Theursan; but when she left the next morning without consenting to see any one, she allowed Sylvia to go with her to her carriage. I saw them pass in the park, from a place where they could not perceive me: Madame de Theursan seemed to be overwhelmed, and no longer to have strength for anger or resentment. At the moment of quitting Sylvia, in order to rejoin her carriage, which was waiting for her at the gate, she held out her hand to her; then, after an instant's hesitation, she threw herself, sobbing, into her arms. I heard Sylvia offer to accompany her a part of the way, to take care of her. "No," said Madame de Theursan, "the sight of you causes me too much pain; but if I send for you in my last hour, promise me to come and close my eyes."—"I swear to you, that I will do so," replied Sylvia, "and I swear to you also that Fernande shall never know your secret."—"And *that young man*, will he keep it?" added Madame de Theursan, speaking of me. "Forgive me, for I am very unhappy!"—"I have something to restore to you," continued Sylvia: "these are the three lines of writing that Jacques showed you yesterday, the only existing proofs of my birth: you may destroy them, and you ought to do so. Here is the one half of the image—leave me the other: it can no longer betray anything to any one, and I prize it for Jacques' sake."—"Good, good person!" cried Madame de Theursan, accepting with transport the papers that Sylvia offered her; this was her only expression of gratitude. In that evil heart, the joy of being delivered from a personal fear, prevailed over the repentance and

confusion of a guilty conscience : she departed with precipitation.

Sylvia remained a long time motionless, watching her ; when she had disappeared behind the paling, she crossed her arms upon her bosom, and I heard these words, that seemed to die away on her pale lips : " My mother ! " — " Explain to me this mystery, Sylvia," said I, going to her, and kissing her hand with a sort of irresistible veneration ; " how can this woman be your mother, when you supposed yourself the sister of Jacques ? " Her face assumed an indefinable expression of self-collectedness, as she replied, " There is no one in the world but this woman who could have known whose daughter I am, and she does not know ! She is my mother." — " She was beloved, then, by Jacques' father ? " — " Yes," said she, " and by another at the same time." — " But what was there in that paper ? " — " Four or five words from the hand of Jacques' father, attesting that I was the daughter of Madame de Theursan, but declaring that he was not sure of being my father, and that, being in doubt upon this point, he had not been willing to take charge of me. It was he who put round my neck this image, of which I have the half, when sending me to the foundling-hospital." — " What a destiny is yours, Sylvia ! " said I ; " God well knew why he gave you so great a heart." — " My own sorrows are nothing," she replied, making a gesture as though to drive away all personal preoccupations : " it is yours that pain me, those of Fernande, and, above all, those of Jacques." — " And have you no compassion also for mine ? " said I sadly. " It is you whom I pity the most," she replied, " because you are the weakest. However, there is one thing that reconciles me : it is, that you have come ; that was manly." I would have conversed with her upon our mutual troubles ; at that moment I felt myself disposed to a confidence and an esteem that I shall perhaps never again feel in my heart. I had just seen her perform a noble action ; I would have intrusted her with all my thoughts ;

but she punished me for my past distrust, by closing her soul against me. "That concerns Jacques," said she, "and I know not what is passing in his mind. Your duty is to wait until he has taken a part: be very sure that he knows everything, but that his first and only care, at this moment, is, to reassure and console Fernande."

She quitted me, and passed alone into another alley of the park. I went to inquire about Fernande's health; her husband was in her chamber, and read while she slept. What a position is mine, Herbert! To act toward this family as in former times, when things have passed between us that must make reconciliation impossible! Do you comprehend how-much courage I need in order to be able to knock at this door that Jacques will open? and what I suffer when he goes out, saying to me, with his impenetrable calmness, "Prevail on her to have the courage to live"? What, then, is hidden beneath the impassible generosity of this man? Is it through the effort of a sublime love that he thus sacrifices all his fury and all his sufferings? There are instants in which I believe it; and yet that is too far above humanity for me to believe it sincerely. If he had not already given proofs of his bravery and of his contempt of life, such as I shall never perhaps have the opportunity of giving, one might say he was afraid to fight with me; but to me, who have seen him day after day for a year, such an explanation would have no meaning. The opinion which I am more inclined to adopt is, that his heart is kind without being ardent, and that his affections are noble without being impassioned. He has imposed stoicism upon himself, that he may do as other men; that he may play a part; and he has so completely identified himself with some type of antiquity, that he has become a sort of antique hero, at once ridiculous and admirable in an age like this. To what course will he be counselled by his dream of greatness? How far will this strange magnanimity extend? Is he waiting until his wife's health be re-established, to break

with her, or to demand an explanation from me? He seems at once confounded and satisfied by the audacity of my conduct, and he sometimes looks at me with eyes in which gleams the thirst for my blood. Does he brood over his vengeance, or will he make a holocaust of it? I am waiting. For three days we have been at the same point. Fernande has been really sick, and we have not been without uneasiness one night. Jacques and Sylvia have permitted me to watch in her chamber with them: whatever may be at the bottom of their souls, I thank them for it from the bottom of mine. I hope that ere long Fernande will be well: her youth, her good constitution, and the care which is taken to remove from her the thought of any new sorrow, will do yet more, I hope, than the aid of a very good physician who came to attend her daughter, and who has remained for her.

Adieu, my friend. Burn this letter: it contains a secret which I have sworn to keep, and which I have not betrayed by imparting it to my other self.

LXXVII.

Jacques to M. Borel.

MY OLD COMRADE: I thank you for your letter, and for the excellent intentions of your friendship. I know that you would have fought with great willingness to defend my wife from an insult, and to do me even a less important service. I hope you regard this devotion as reciprocal, and that, if you ever have occasion to make a serious appeal to friendship, you will address yourself to no other than myself. Thank your kind Eugénie also from me, for the care she has taken of Fernande; and entreat her, if she writes to

her, not to let her know that I have received the letter in which you informed me of all that has passed. Adieu, my brave: count upon me, in life and in death.

LXXVIII.

Jacques to Octave.

I WOULD spare you the embarrassment of a verbal explanation: it could only be difficult and painful between us: we shall come to an understanding more quickly and more coolly by writing. I have several questions to put to you, and I hope that you will not contest my right to interrogate you upon certain things which interest me at least as much as yourself.

1. Do you think that I am ignorant of what has passed between you and a certain person whom it is not necessary to name?

2. In coming back to this place, a few days since, at the same time with her, and in presenting yourself to me with assurance, what has been your intention?

3. Have you a true attachment for that person? Would you take charge of her, and would you promise to consecrate your life to her, if her husband abandoned her?

Reply to these three questions; and if you respect the life and the repose of this person, keep the subject of this letter a secret from her: by betraying it, you would render her future welfare and happiness impossible.

LXXIX.

Octave to Jacques.

I WILL reply to your questions with the frankness and confidence of a man who is sure of himself.

1. I knew, when I left Touraine, that you were informed of what had passed between *her* and me.

2. I came here to offer you my life as a reparation for the outrage and the wrong that I have done you: should you be generous toward *her*, I will uncover my breast, and I will entreat you to shoot me, or to strike me with your sword, I with my hands empty; but if you would revenge yourself upon *her*, I will dispute my life with you, and will try to kill you.

3. I have for *her* an attachment so deep and so true, that, if you were to abandon her, whether through death or through resentment, I take my oath to consecrate my whole life entirely to her.

Adieu, Jacques. I am unhappy, but I can not tell you that I suffer on your account; if you wish to revenge yourself on me, you must desire to find me standing. I should be a coward if I implored you; I should be imprudent if I braved you: but I ought to await you, and I do await you. Decide for yourself.

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LXXX.

Octave to Herbert.

JACQUES has gone. Whither does he go, and when will he return? Will he ever come back? All this is still a mystery to me; this man has a mania for being impenetrable. I should prefer twenty thrusts of the sword to this disdainful silence. And yet, of what can I accuse him? His conduct thus far has been sublime toward his wife; but his mercy toward me humiliates me, or his slowness to avenge himself makes me impatient. It is not living, to be thus doubtful of the present, and uncertain of the future.

I sent you a copy of the note which he wrote me from Saint-Léon, and of the answer which I sent him from the parsonage; all between breakfast and dinner, which bring us every day together, as formerly: for it is well to tell you that it is now several days since Fernande requested me to resume our old way of living, telling me that she was authorized by Jacques to give me this invitation. It was the day when she came down to the saloon for the first time since her sickness, and the next day Jacques sent me that message by his groom. I had the assurance to go and dine there as I did the day before, and Jacques received me as on other days—that is to say, with a shake of the hand and a grave countenance. This shake of the hand, which he does not give me when we meet alone, is evidently an external demonstration intended to reassure his wife, and the death of their child is sufficient warrant for his silence and reserve, which she takes for sadness. However, after dinner, he followed me into the garden, and said to me, “Your intentions are such as I had supposed them to be: it is sufficient. You are a faithless friend, but you are not a heartless

man. I require only one thing more : your word of honor that you will hide from Fernande the explanation that we have had together, and that never in any moment of your life, were I a hundred leagues away, were I dead, will you inform her that I knew the truth." I gave him my word ; and he added, " Are you fully aware of the importance of the oath which you have sworn to me ? " — " I think so," replied I. " Remember that this is the first and the principal reparation that I demand of you for the evil you have done us ; remember that you would strike Fernande with a mortal wound, the day in which you should let her know that I had forgiven her. You undoubtedly comprehend that, in certain circumstances, gratitude is an humiliation and a torment : one suffers where one can not thank without blushing, and you know that Fernande is proud." — " O Jacques ! " I exclaimed with effusion, " I know that you are sublime toward her ! " — " Do not thank me," said he in an altered voice ; " I can not be so toward you." And he went hastily away.

Yesterday I found Fernande sad and uneasy. " Jacques is going to leave us again," said she ; " he pretends to have some indispensable business that calls him to Paris ; but in our present situation, everything alarms me. Perhaps he has at last received that fatal letter from Borel, which may have been delayed by some chance in the post ; perhaps he deceives me by a feigned gentleness, dictated to him by compassion. I tremble lest he be aware of the past, and have the project of abandoning me altogether without saying anything to me." I reassured her by telling her that, in that case, Jacques would certainly have sought an explanation from me ; and I deceived her by assuring her that he had, on the contrary, testified toward me a more lively affection than ever. Fernande is one whom it is very easy to blind : she is so little accustomed to reasoning, and so little capable of observation, that she never knows the persons who are about her, and does not comprehend her own life.

She is a sweet and guileless creature, always governed by the instinct of loving, by the need of believing, and too piously credulous of the affection of others to be capable of penetration. Jacques entered and spoke of his affairs in so plausible a manner, Sylvia seemed so entirely to believe in them, and we were in appearance such good friends, that she said to me in the evening, "Oh! what heroic confidence on the part of Jacques! he still leaves us together! Remember, Octave, that you would be a monster if you abused it, and that from that moment I should be forced to hate you." Jacques left this morning, calm, and showing me an affection really stoical. He must believe that his wife is my mistress, and yet she is not. She has courageously refused herself to me, and I have had the strength to submit, even on occasions when the fear of losing her, and the trouble of my passions, might well have triumphed over all scruples. It may be that, if Jacques knew this, he would act otherwise: it may be that I ought to have told him. It would have been another sort of heroism to have made him stay by saying to him, "Your wife is pure: take her back, and I go." But it is written that I shall never be a hero; it is quite impossible for me, and I have an insurmountable antipathy to scenes of declamation. I know myself too well: I should have gone out at the door, and at the end of eight days I should have come in again at the window; I should have confessed that for a year I have been the stupidest of seducers, and I should have become criminal immediately after this fine confession. Besides, would Jacques have had faith in my word, either for the past or for the future? I can no longer believe him blind. There are moments in which this pomp of generosity so far imposes on me, that I give myself up to admiration with a puerile sensibility; and then my reason regains the mastery, and I say to myself that, after all, life is a comedy, by which those who play it do not allow themselves to be taken in; that after the tirades, and the scenes of effect, each one

wipes off his paint, takes off his costume, and sets himself to eat or to sleep. Jacques would be what he thinks he is, had Nature endowed him, like me, with vehement passions. If he loved Fernande as I love her, and if he renounced her as he does, I would bow before him. But I know well that when one is in love as I am, one is not capable of such sacrifices. He likes the heroic style, and his peaceful nature, his passions cooled by the habit of reasoning, or by age, second him wonderfully. Let my heart be put into his bosom for quarter of an hour, and all this scaffolding would fall. He asks nothing better than to remove himself from his wife; he loves journeys and solitude, like Childe Harold; he is better pleased to have to practise the theory of *renunciation* which he has made for himself, than to enjoy all the blessings of life; and his pride finds more satisfaction in being able to pardon me, than he would have had in killing me in a duel. He thinks of the admiration which he imposes on me, and believes himself more fully revenged by my repentance than by my death. Do not think that I would deny what is fine in his character and in his conduct: in truth, I believe him capable of the action of Regulus. But if Regulus had lived under my eyes, I am quite sure that I should have found in his private life a thousand occasions for doubting and for smiling. Heroes are men who set out to be demigods in their own eyes, and who end by being so in certain moments, by dint of despising and combating humanity. Of what use is it, after all? One makes for oneself a posterity of admirers and of imitators; but what can one enjoy from the depths of the tomb?

I try in vain to find my happiness in this life in the joys of pride: truth effaces them with a gleam of her mirror, and I find myself alone and powerless, with my passion and my desire in my heart. Yesterday, when Jacques set out, a thousand follies passed through my mind: I longed to bid adieu to Fernande and go with him; what could I do? But when he had gone, and Fernande, weeping, let me kiss her

hands wetted with tears, and little by little her snowy neck and her beautiful hair, the touch of which thrilled me with happiness, I felt very well contented to be alone with her ; and, in spite of myself, I thanked Heaven for having inspired Jacques with the fancy of going away. If I had tortured my mind to prove to myself that gratitude and admiration would cure me of love, the boiling of my blood and the bounding of my heart would have given the lie victoriously to this vain affectation and this pedantic virtue. Fernande is still quite moved and quite penetrated with sorrow at this departure : the excellent child believes in her husband as she does in God, and I should be very sorry at present to combat this veneration. It is true that she supposes him imbecile, in believing firmly that he has not the least suspicion of our love. You see what is the sentiment of veneration : it is like faith in miracles : it is a labor of the imagination to excite the heart and paralyze the understanding. She begins to be quite well ; but her son grows evidently thin and pale. She does not yet perceive it ; but I fear that she may soon have another subject for tears, and that neither of these children was born with a good organization. All the misfortunes that can strike her will attach me to her : I am not a great man, but I love her, and I played no part when I vowed to consecrate my life to her. Sylvia is plunged in a sadness of which I did not think her capable ; she dissimulates it before Fernande, and behaves to her like an angel ; but her countenance betrays a secret suffering and preoccupation altogether foreign to her grave and methodical character. During the last few days, a singular idea has come into my mind with regard to Sylvia ; I will tell you of it, if it take consistence.

P. S.—Fernande has just received a letter from Madame Borel, in which she informs her that her husband's letter to Jacques was never sent, for the reason that she took it upon herself to tear it up, instead of putting it into the post.

Jacques must have arranged this also. It can not be denied that this man is ingenious and magnificent in the way in which he fulfils his task.

LXXXI.

Jacques to Sylvia.

PARIS.

You weep for me, poor Sylvia! Forget me, as the dead are forgotten. All is over with me. Hang a pall between us, and try to live with the living. I have fulfilled my task, I have lived quite enough, I have suffered enough. Now I may allow myself to fall to the earth, and may roll myself in the dust wetted with my tears. On leaving you I wept, and my eyes were not dry for three days. I see clearly that I am a man whose course is finished, for never have I seen my heart broken and annihilated thus. I feel it melting away in my bosom. God withdraws my strength from me, because henceforth it would be useless to me. I have nothing more to suffer, I have nothing more to love: my part is ended among men.

Let her think me blind, deaf, and indolent. Keep her in this confidence, and let her never suspect that I die by her hand. She would weep, and I would not that she should suffer any more from me. She has suffered enough as it is. She has learned too well what it is to take part in my destiny, and what a malediction strikes, as with a thunderbolt, all that attaches itself to me. She has been as a weapon of death in the hand of Azrael; but it is not her fault that the exterminator has made use of her love, as a poisoned arrow, to pierce my heart. Now, the anger of Heaven, I hope, will be appeased. There is no longer in me any living

place to strike. You will all rest, and be healed from having loved me.

Her health makes me uneasy, and I await impatiently to hear from you whether my departure and the emotion she felt in bidding me adieu have not made her worse. I ought perhaps to have remained a few days longer, and have waited until she was stronger, but I could no longer contain myself. I am a man, and not a hero : I felt in my breast all the tortures of jealousy, and I feared lest I might give way to some odious movement of selfishness and vengeance. Fernande is not to blame for my sufferings ; she is not even aware of them : she thinks me a stranger to human passions. Octave himself imagines, perhaps, that I tranquilly support my misfortune, and that I obey without effort a duty that I have imposed upon myself. Be it thus, and let them be happy ! Their compassion would make me furious, and I can not yet renounce the cruel satisfaction of leaving doubt and the expectation of my vengeance suspended like a sword above that man's head. Ah ! I can no more ! You see whether my soul be stoical. No, it is not. It is you, Sylvia, who are heroic, and who judge me after yourself. But I am a man like other men ; my passions transport me like the wind, and gnaw into me like fire. I have not created to myself an order of virtue superior to nature : it is only that I am filled with such a plenitude of affection, that I am compelled to sacrifice to it everything that belongs to me, even my heart, when I have nothing more to offer. I have studied only one thing in the world, and that is love ; through having experienced all that saddens and poisons it, I have comprehended how noble a sentiment it is, how difficult to preserve, how much and how many sacrifices must be accomplished before we can boast of having known it. If I had not loved Fernande, I should perhaps have taken a wrong course. I know not whether I could have commanded the bitterness and hatred with which I am inspired by the sight of the man who has exposed her to the derision

of others, by his imprudence and his selfish follies. But she loves him, and, because I am bound to her by an eternal affection, the life of her lover becomes sacred to me. To resist the temptation of ridding myself of him, I go away, and God only knows what despair and what torments every day that I leave to him will cause me. If I have any other virtue than my love, it is perhaps a natural justice, a rectitude of judgment, which no social prejudice, no personal consideration, has ever impaired. It would be impossible for me to conquer any happiness whatsoever through violence or perfidy, without being at once disgusted with my conquest. It would seem to me that I had stolen a treasure, and I should cast it on the ground, and go and hang myself, like Judas. This seems to me to be the result of a logic so inflexible and so absolute, that I could not be proud of not being a brute like three fourths of the men I see. Borel, in my place, would have quietly beaten his wife, and perhaps would not have blushed to receive her afterward into his bed, debased by his blows and his kisses. There are men who cut the throat of an unfaithful wife without ceremony, after the fashion of the orientals, because they consider her as legal property. Others fight with their rival, kill him, or drive him away, and again seek the kisses of the woman they pretend to love, and who shrinks from them with horror, or resigns herself in despair. These, in cases of conjugal love, are the most common ways of acting, and I say that the love of the hogs is less vile and less gross than that of these men. Let hatred succeed to affection, let the perfidy of the woman awaken the resentment of her husband, let certain basenesses on the part of her who deceives him give him, to a certain point, the right to avengé himself, and I can conceive of violence and fury; but what can he do who loves?

I can not persuade myself that I am (as many will no doubt think me) weak in spirit, and of an imbecile character, because I have persevered in my love. My heart is not

mean, and my judgment has not changed. If Fernande were unworthy of this love, I should no longer feel it. An hour of contempt would suffice to cure me of it. I well remember what I felt during the three days that I thought her infamous. But now she yields to a passion that a year of combats and of resistance has rooted in her heart. I am forced to admire her, for I could still have loved her, had she yielded to it at the end of a month. (No human creature can command love, and no one is guilty for feeling or for losing it.) It is falsehood that debases a woman. That which constitutes adultery is not the hour that she accords to her lover : it is the night that she afterward passes in the arms of her husband. Oh ! I should hate my wife, and I should indeed become ferocious, if to my lips she had offered lips still warm with another's kisses, and had passed, unblushing, from his embrace to mine. She would have become hideous to me from that day, and I would have crushed her as I would a caterpillar that I should find in my bed. But such as she is, pale, depressed, suffering all the anguish of a timorous conscience, incapable of lying, and ever ready to confess to me her involuntary fault, I can only pity and regret her. Have I not seen, since her return, that my apparent confidence pained her terribly, and that her knees were bending incessantly to implore my forgiveness ? How much address, how much precaution have I needed, in order to retain upon her lips the avowal that was always ready to escape them ! You asked me why I have not accepted the confession and the sacrifice that she has so often desired to make to me. It is because I believe the confession to be useless, and the sacrifice impossible. You do not like that one should doubt the virtue of others, and you have reproached me for being no longer willing to confide in the heroism of which Fernande would still perhaps have been capable. What ! this last proof, this fatal journey to Touraine, was it not sufficient to measure Fernande's strength ? I know her well : I know how far goes her virtue, as I know

where it ends. Her natural chastity is the best safeguard that can protect her; and doubtless it has long protected her. But the resolution to give up Octave for ever could not be sustained in this childish sensitive soul, that is alarmed by the smallest suffering, and that succumbs under any real misfortune. Is this her fault? Should we not be fools and executioners, if we required of her what she has not to give —if we struck her to force her to walk when her feet fail her? Did she not come near dying because she lost her daughter? Poor suffering creature! sensitive plant, shrinking at the lightest breath of the air! how could I have the brutal courage to torment thee, and the stupid pride to despise thee because God has made thee so weak and so gentle? Oh! simple flower that the breeze was breaking on its stem, I loved thee for thy delicate and pure beauty, and I gathered thee, hoping to keep for myself alone thine exquisite perfume, that was exhaling in shade and in solitude; but the passing breeze has borne it from me, and my bosom may no longer retain it! Is that a reason why I should hate thee and trample thee under my feet? No, I will lay thee gently in the dew whence I took thee, and I will bid thee farewell, because my breath can no longer give thee life, and because there is another in thine atmosphere who will raise and reanimate thee. Bloom again, then, O my fair lily! I shall never touch thee more.

LXXXII.

Jacques to Sylvia.

TOURNAI.

I HAVE come back to this place. A strange idea came into my head, which I will explain to you in a few days. I have received your letter; it was forwarded to me from Paris at the same time with that from Fernande, which is very affectionate and very laconic. Yes, I conceive what she suffers in writing to me. Alas! she will be unable to love me even with friendship! My remembrance will be a torment to her, and my spectre will appear to her as a remorse!

I thank you for assuring me that she is quite well, that the beautiful hues of health are returning to her cheeks, and that she weeps less often and less bitterly for her daughter. Yes, this is what you must say to me, to give me courage. Courage! to what end? I have needed it, and I have had it. But what should I do with it henceforth? You speak in vain, Sylvia: I have nothing more to do upon the earth. You know what the physician, pressed by my questions, told me of my son. I comprehended, with half a word, what I must fear, and what I might expect. The most smiling hope that remains to me is, to see him survive his sister one year. He has the same defect of organization. I am not, then, necessary to this child, and I must strive to detach myself from him, as from an annihilated hope. I would still live for Fernande, if she needed me. But, in case he whom she loves should one day abandon her, you are her sister, her true sister, by affection and by blood: you will take my place beside her, Sylvia, and your friendship will be less onerous and more efficacious to her than mine. My death

could do her nothing but good. I know that her heart is too delicate to allow her to rejoice at it ; but, in spite of herself, she would feel it to be an amelioration of her fate. She could afterward marry Octave, and the unhappy scandal that their love has made here, would be ended for ever.

You tell me that she afflicts herself much with the idea of this scandal ; that this remembrance, effaced for some time by her still more lively sorrow for the death of her daughter, and by the fear of losing my affection, has reawakened in her mind since she has become somewhat resigned to the one, and somewhat reassured as to the other. You tell me that she asks you every hour whether it be possible that this adventure may not reach me in Paris, and that, when one has succeeded in tranquillizing her on this point, by reasons that one would not venture to give to a child, she trembles at the idea of being covered with ridicule, and of serving as a subject for the coffeehouse jestings of a province, and the messroom gossipings of a regiment. All that is Octave's work, and she forgives him ! She loves him well then !

Upon this last point of suffering and of disquiet, you can reassure her by arguments of tolerable plausibility. I am very glad that she speaks to you of all this with freedom : this confidence will console her so much, and you, more than any one else, will be able to lessen her sadness by an enlightened friendship.

This sort of scandal is much less important to a young woman than she imagines. Many would be vain of the species of celebrity that results from it, and of the attraction which their attention and their good graces have henceforward for men. A coquette would make it her starting-point in a brilliant career of audacity and of triumphs. Fernande is not one of these characters : she thinks only of blushing and of hiding herself. Let her retire into the depths of that tranquil and happy life that I have sought to create for her, and to leave to her ; but let her not lose her time in weeping

over an incident which will be the anecdote of a day, and will be forgotten the next morning for another. There are ridiculous and shameful events from which it is difficult to wash oneself; but such events can not happen in the life of a woman like Fernande. What can they say? That she is beautiful; that she has inspired a passion; that a man exposed himself, in order not to compromise her, to the risk of breaking his neck by fleeing over the roofs. There is nothing ugly or degrading in all this. If Octave had parleyed with the sorry jesters who besieged him, it would have been very different. The love of a coward dishonors a woman, however noble she may be. But Octave has behaved well. Every one knows that he escorted her on her journey home, so finely do the mysteries and plots of this foolish fellow succeed! Happily, he has a heart, and one may discover all his puerile secrets without finding in his conduct any subject for contempt. The ridiculousness and the odiousness of all this fall upon me. I am accused of having a mistress in my house. It is even said—so quickly do silly espionage and erroneous interpretations make the tour of the world—that I tried to make her pass for my sister, but that Madame de Theursan came and unmasked the imposture. It is some servant, it is perhaps Madame de Theursan herself, who has spread this report! This is the advantage that base hearts take of the patience and generosity of others! In a word, I am laughed at at Tours. M. Lorrain, an old officer in my regiment with whom I had an affair twenty years ago, amuses himself in every way at my expense. But all this is my affair, and I will attend to it.

You do not pronounce Octave's name: I conclude that you suppose this precaution to be necessary: but fear nothing. It is very true that I can not read or trace this fatal name without a shudder of hatred from head to foot; but I must accustom myself to it. I must know all that passes down there: if he loves her, and if he makes her happy.

Adieu, Sylvia, the only one among all who has never injured me. I need not tell you that my presence at Tours must be hidden from Fernande.

LXXXIII.

Sylvia to Jacques.

MON Dieu! what are you doing at Tours? This terrifies me. Do you think of avenging the calumnies that are spread abroad concerning us? If I knew you less, I should be persuaded that it was so. And yet, in vain do I call to mind your horror of duelling: I still tremble lest you may be engaged in some affair of that kind; it would not be the first time that you have thought yourself obliged to be false to your principles, and to do something antipathetic to your character. Nevertheless, I do not see that on this occasion you ought to hazard your life against that of another. In what would it repair the wrong that has been done to Fernande? Any other man than yourself would reply that he had a personal affront to revenge; but are you capable of committing what you consider to be a crime, to satisfy personal vengeance? You have related to me the circumstances of your first duel: it was precisely with this Lorrain; you then yielded to a consideration of this kind, but the necessity was urgent; you were every day in each other's presence under the eyes of a multitude, and you were both soldiers. It mattered little if the cannon or the sword carried off one of you a day earlier or later: what was life to you at that time. But now, when your position is so different, how could it be possible that you should take this journey to wash yourself from calumnies that do not reach us, and to avenge yourself for insults that they dare to offer you only at a distance? In

vain do you endeavor to prove to me that your life is henceforth useful to no one : you are mistaken. Oh ! let not your courage abandon you thus ! To persuade oneself thus that the task is finished, is a calculation of idleness, that wishes to fold its arms. Why do you condemn your son with this despair ? Did not the physician tell you that nature operated miracles beyond all the foresight of science, and that with assiduous cares and a severe regimen your child might grow stronger ? I maintain this regimen scrupulously, and for several days our dear little one has been really well. If I should die myself, who would take care of him ? Fernande is ignorant of his sickness, and, moreover, her solicitude is almost always unskilful. Who has a right, then, to impose life on me, when you rid yourself so easily of yours ? Do you think it would be very beautiful, the life that you would leave me ? And Fernande, does she no longer need you ? What do we know of Octave, when he knows nothing of himself, and prides himself on resisting none of the caprices that come to him ? He says he is sure of always loving Fernande : perhaps this is true, perhaps it is false. He has behaved well since he compromised her ; but is he a man to succeed you, and to fill a heart wherein you have reigned ? Will she be able to love him long ? will she not one day need to be delivered from him ?

You wish me to tell you exactly the truth with regard to them, and I feel that I ought to do so. At this moment they are happy : they love with transport ; they are blind, deaf, and insensible. Fernande has moments of awakening and despair ; Octave has instants of terror and uncertainty ; but they can not resist the torrent that draws them on. Octave seeks to reassure his conscience by lowering your virtue ; he dares not deny it, but he tries to explain it by motives that diminish its merit : in order to excuse himself from admiring you, and to console himself for being less great than you, he tries to sap the pedestal on which you have deserved to be raised. You have divined truly : he denies

your passions, in order to deny your sacrifice. Fernande defends you with more vigor than you think, and her veneration resists all attacks. She says that you love her to such a point as to be capable of remaining blind eternally; she says that in this you are sublime: and then she weeps so bitterly that I am obliged to console her, and to raise her again in her own eyes. My poor sister! there are instants in which I feel resentment against her for having done you so much harm. When I see her face serene, and her hand within that of Octave, I flee, I hide myself in the depths of the wood, or I go and weep beside your son's cradle, to get rid of my indignation without making them suffer. But when I see her tortured by remorse, I pity her, and suffer with her. I think, with you, that her adventure is less serious than the prudery of many women would make it out to be. I see that it has not alienated from her the affection of Madame Borel, who appears to me a generous and sensible person. Her life might yet be very beautiful, if Octave would let it be so; she would return to you, I am sure, if she had to complain of him, or if he inspired her with the courage of which, on the contrary, he seeks to deprive her. Could she blush to accept her forgiveness from a soul as noble as yours, and would you suffer in forgiving her? Oh! how much you love her still, and what a love is yours! Your only care, in the midst of this ocean of sorrows, is, to ward off from her the hundredth part of what you feel.

I received from Madame de Theursan the strange present of some hundreds of francs: it was not, as you may believe, the smallness of the gift that caused me to refuse it; I know that she has no fortune, and that this present was liberal, considering her means; but I admire this reparation of the abandonment of my whole life. It seems like a mockery. I thanked her, however, and only assigned as the motive of my refusal, the absence of any wants on my part. Perhaps I ought to be grateful for the intention—I can not: I can never forgive her for having brought me into the world.

LXXXIV.

Jacques to Sylvia.

WHAT shall I say to you? Lorrain was a bad man, and I have killed him. He fired at me the first: I had provoked him; he missed me. I knew that I needed only to will to bring him down, and I willed it. Is it a crime that I have committed? Certainly; but what matters it to me? I am not capable of knowing what remorse is at this moment. There are so many other things boiling within me, that transport me out of myself! God will pardon me. It is no longer I who act: Jacques is dead; the being who has succeeded him is an unhappy one whom God has not blessed, and of whom he takes no thought. I might have been good, if my destiny had favored my sentiments; but everything has failed, everything has forsaken me; the physical man regains the ascendancy, and this man has in him the instinct of a tiger, like all others. I felt the thirst of blood burning within me: this murder has somewhat appeased me. When expiring, the unhappy man said to me, "Jacques, it was written that I should die by your hand; otherwise you would not have maimed me for a caricature, and you would not have killed me to-day for being a" He died while addressing to me this insult, which seemed to console him. I remained a long time motionless, contemplating the expression of irony that lingered on the face of this corpse: his fixed eyes seemed to brave me, his smile seemed to deny my vengeance. I could have wished to kill him a second time. I must kill another, no matter whom; this solaces me, and it does good to Fernande: nothing re-establishes a woman like vengeance for insults that she has received. They say here that I am mad. That matters little to me! they will

no longer say that I am a coward, and that I suffer my wife's infidelity because I can not fight ; they will say that I have for her a passion that makes me lose my reason. Well ! they will think, at least, that she who exercises such an empire over a husband whom she no longer loves, must be a woman worthy of love ; other women will envy this sort of throne on which, in my delirium, I shall have placed her, and Octave, for a moment, will envy me my part ; for there is no one but myself who has the right to fight for her, and he is obliged to let me repair the mischief that he has done. Adieu. Do not be concerned about me ; I shall live : I feel that it is my destiny, and that, at this moment, my body is invulnerable. There is an invisible hand that covers me, and that reserves to itself the work of striking me. No, my life is not in the power of any man : of this I have an intimate conviction. I have made a sacrifice of it, and it is absolutely indifferent to me whether I lose or whether I preserve it. The angel that protects Fernande is near me ; he speaks to me of her in my sleep ; he stretches his wings over me when I fight for her sake ; when I am no longer necessary to any one, he also will abandon me. I made my will in Paris : in case of the death of my son, I leave two thirds of my property to my wife, and the rest to you ; but fear nothing : my hour is not come.

LXXXV.

M. Borel to Captain Jean.

CERISTY.

MY COMRADE: You must go and take my place at Tours, directly, with Jacques, who fights again this evening. I can neither serve as his second, nor even go and invest you with my functions; I have so sound an attack of the gout, that it would be impossible for me to ride a league in a carriage. Jacques has just sent for me: go immediately, by the cross-road, and offer him my excuses and your services; these things can not be refused. I will try, in three words, to give you the hang of the affair. Hardly rested from having killed Lorrain, to whom God give peace! Jacques goes off to the coffeehouse, as though nothing had happened, and, with that icy manner that you know he has when he is angry, he smokes his pipe and takes his half-cup in presence of more than a hundred pairs of mustaches, young and old, who examine him not without a little curiosity, as you may think. The young officers who had played off the farce you know of, upon his wife's lover, thought themselves insulted or at least provoked by his presence and his face; they affected to talk aloud of deceived husbands in general, and to repeat, at a table near his own, the word that could least flatter the ears of Jacques. As he remained impassible, they spoke a little more clearly of his wife, and they finished by designating her so well, that Jacques rose, saying, "You have lied," in the tone in which he would have said, "I am at your service." Two of these gentlemen, who had spoken last, got up, asking to whom the lie had been addressed. "To both of you," replied Jacques; "let him who asks an

explanation of me the first, give his name. "I, Philippe de Munck—to-morrow at any hour you choose," said one of them. "No," replied Jacques, "this evening, if you please; for there are two of you, and I must have the time to give an explanation to this other gentlemen to-morrow before the police interfere with me."—"That is true," returned M. de Munck; "this evening, at six, and with the sabre."—"With the sabre, be it so," said Jacques. You see it is an affair that can not be arranged in any way. Two hours after, I received a message from him, asking me to be his second again; but I have brought on the gout by standing in the dew yesterday, at the affair of Lorrain, and perhaps also I felt a little emotion at seeing that poor devil fall. It is no great loss; but he has been a long time growing gray among us, and we are no longer at the age when a comrade fell like a stone from a kernel. This Jacques is astonishing, and that proves that a man changes only on the outside; the tree only renews its bark, and Jacques is to-day the same that we knew him twenty years ago. They will no longer say, "See what becomes of these old soldiers, and what a dance their wives lead them! here is one who fought for a stroke of the pencil, and lets himself be dishonored without saying a word." My faith! I said so myself, and his situation occupied my mind so much, that the day before yesterday, an hour before learning that he was here, I was dreaming of him, and I awakened, crying out—so says my wife—"Jacques, Jacques, what has become of you?" But a man who has a heart always comes right again. Let us hope that, in getting through with this, he will go and kill his wife's lover; make him feel that he ought to do this, and that without it all that he is doing now is of no use. Go quickly. The prefect is a brave fellow who allows duels to go on without any interference; yet three affairs in three days are more than agrees with the ordinance, and Jacques might very well happen to get arrested after the second. He must be quick. Write me by an express this evening, when he has finished

with M. de Munck. I am enraged not to be there. I would rather lose an arm than not see Jacques come up to the mark.

LXXXVI.

Captain Jean to M. Morel.

TOURS.

JACQUES has finished with all his adversaries without receiving a scratch: he has luck at play, like all those who have none in the house. M. de Munck has a gash across his face, which separates his nose in halves, and must be singularly vexatious to him. This can not give back his honor to any husband, but may very well console some, and preserve others. He is a handsome fellow, at any rate. Beauty will weep for him, and will seek some one to succeed him. The other young man did not care to ask Jacques for his share. He was a chick of nineteen, an only son, and child of good family: what could I do? The seconds showed so much desire to arrange the affair, that we consented to say that we should be sorry for having given the lie, if it were true that there had been no intention to offend us. They assured us that there had been no such intention. This may perhaps be an injury to the child; but I think that, his seconds having made some overtures, the thing was too unequal between him and Jacques. We had trouble enough in making this one listen to reason: he has the bile of all the devils, and it was only after ripe deliberation that he became somewhat softened. Do you know that the comrade goes on well? This can not be called making the first advances; and whether he is right or wrong in using the sabre here rather than down yonder, it

is a pleasure and an honor to see an old comrade giving such proofs before the new army. As to the rest, the comrade is in no very good humor; and, to those who know him well, it is easy to see that he thirsts for the blood of a good many others. I do not know what he reckons upon doing: I said to him, when receiving his thanks for having served him as second, "I would like to serve you on a fourth occasion, and would willingly take the journey with you for that purpose. Now that you have your hand in, are you not going to begin with the one who has a right to it?" He answered me half fig, half raisin: "If any one asks you, you will say that you know nothing about it." — "Ah! there now, are you angry also with the veterans?" said I. Thereupon he embraced me, charging me to give you his adieux and his friendly regards. He must have gone by this time, for the prefect had him privately informed that he should be obliged to arrest him, if he did not take himself off pretty quick. I left him shutting up his trunk, and am come back to my *perch*, where I shall expect you to breakfast as soon as the gout will permit you to come. Meanwhile, I will come and smoke a pipe, and talk this all-over with you. There is much to be said for and against Jacques: he is an odd fish, but he fights like a tiger.

LXXXVII.

Jacques to Sylvia.

AOSTE.

You already have received a note that I sent you from Clermont, in which I announced to you that I had come out of my three duels without a scratch, and that I am as well in body as I am ill in soul : these are the worst news that a man can give of himself. A body that persists in living, and that nourishes with vigor the pains of the soul, is one of Heaven's most mournful gifts. But I did not tell you that I was about to pass within two steps of you without seeing you : I have travelled this road to Lyons for the twentieth time, and for the first time I have passed by my beloved valley without entering it. It was six o'clock in the morning when I found myself at the top of the hill of Saint-Jean, and the postillions, who knew me very well, had already turned the road to descend, when I told them to continue toward the south. Bending from the window of the carriage, I contemplated for a long time that beautiful spot which I shall perhaps never behold again, and all those paths that we have so often trodden together ; but for a long time I hesitated to look at my house. At length, when the woods of Marion were just about to hide it from me, I ordered the postillions to stop, and climbed up above the road, to gaze on it at my ease, and drink in my grief. The rising sun was shining on your windows : were you, then, already up ? Fernande's shutters were closed : she was sleeping, perhaps, in her lover's arms. That house, those gardens, and that valley, filled me with a sort of hatred. I have just killed one man, and disfigured another, without any other reasonable motive than the desire of satisfying my wounded vanity, and I might well look

tranquilly upon the roof that shelters my despair and my shame! Yes, my shame! I well know that this is one of the conventional expressions adopted by a stupid society, and which, to the ear of reason, present no meaning: a man's honor can not be pinned to a woman's side, and it is not in the power of any one to compromise or to sully mine; but I am none the less obliged to be at war with the world because my position covers me with ridicule, and because, in order to clear myself from it, I wash myself in vain with blood. There is but one, I well know, whose death could banish this cruel smile that I see on the faces of all my friends. And yet, Fernande! I would rather endure to be laughed at, than make thy tears flow. I would rather bear the scoffings of the whole universe than thy hatred and thy grief! There is no need of being a hero for this; for I have become a sort of vindictive and cruel brute, but I have still enough of common sense and of justice to comprehend what the logic of my affection shows to me.

I have had some singular discussions with Borel; some others of my old friends in the army tried adroitly to work upon me, and to make me speak, either through interest or through curiosity. I answered them evasively and even roughly: I have a horror of their friendship, as of everything else. I could not, however, avoid speaking with Borel, because at the bottom of his imbecile prejudices there is a certain natural good sense which sometimes listens to reason, and, in the blame which he lavishes upon me, there is real devotion. He was so ill-disposed toward Fernande, that I found it necessary, above all, to justify her. We passed two days together at Tours, he in remonstrating with me, I in seeking, while listening to him with one ear, an opportunity of fighting with Lorrain. We exchanged a good deal of useless argument: he wishing to prove to me that I could no longer love my wife, and I trying to make him comprehend that it was impossible for me not to love her still. He wound up his harangues by asking me what was the use of

my conduct, and whether I hoped to serve as a model and a type of generous husbands : to which I replied, laughing, that I did not even expect my example to be followed by lovers. His stupid solicitude, however, did not spare me one of those pin-pricks that a broken heart may always count upon receiving after a disaster. Of all the men whom I have known, friend, enemy, or simply indifferent, there is not one who has not given me a push toward the grave.

I have had much trouble in calming my irritated blood ; I would have thrown myself into the cannon's mouth with the certainty that I should serve as a bullet for the destruction of others. This sort of belief in fatality would have made a hero or a tiger of me, according to the difference of the weight of a hair in the circumstances that impelled me. I was on the point of killing a child of nineteen for a word ; and then, when I had pardoned him, there came to me a mysterious note that a woman had written to me, entreating me to spare his life, and to renounce my fury. This note was sublime, both in expression and in sentiment ; I thought, at first, that it was from a mother, and I was about to yield, quite touched by its tone, when I perceived, on reading it again, that it was from a mistress. She entreated me to spare her happiness. Happiness ! that word made me furious. Alas ! my poor Sylvia, my head was turned ; I could have wished to kill all who were less unhappy than myself ; I persisted in compelling this young man to fight : it seemed to me that I was obeying the impulse of some unpitied hand, and accomplishing some terrible dream. Captain Jean, one of my seconds, talked to me a long time, without his discourse presenting any meaning to my mind ; at last he succeeded in making me hear one single word : " So, then, Jacques, you are determined to massacre to-day ? " This word *massacre* fell upon my burning breast like a drop of cold water : I seemed to waken from a dream. I did all that he desired, without even hearing on what terms they arranged the claims of my honor ; it was no longer of any

importance to me to produce an effect by my bravery. It had seemed to me, at first, that I longed to exculpate myself from the reproach of being a coward, and that to this feeling of wounded pride I would have sacrificed the life of my father; but this was only a pretext which my despair made use of to drive me on. I had simply an attack of rage: and when this was appeased, I relapsed into apathy, as a furious madman, in the exhaustion that follows one of his crises, falls back upon his straw, and gazes about him with a stupid air. They brought my adversary to me, in order that, according to custom, we might exchange a shake of the hand; but between each minute such ages passed within my mind, that I obeyed mechanically and with surprise. I did not remember that I had ever seen him; I was already a hundred years away from what had just taken place within me: I had entered upon that void of the soul which is henceforward my refuge in this life.

Behold me, then, calmed! God forgive me at what price! But he knows that all this has not depended upon myself, and that my being has been transformed unknown to my will. Ah! that anger—it was dreadful! but it did me good, like the convulsions and howlings of an epileptic. I am now heavier than a mountain, colder than a glacier: I contemplate my life with a frightful indifference; I seem to myself like those martyrs of the fabulous ages of Christianity, who, after the torture, raised themselves by a miracle, gathered up their head or their heart yet panting on the arena, and began to walk, carrying off their soul, separated from their body, before the eyes of the terrified spectators.

Any other than myself certainly could not have supported my destiny: there is no one upon earth besides myself who would have had the strength to accomplish such a life, without either dying of lassitude, or killing myself in a fit of delirium. And yet I have passed through all this, and I am still here! All that was young, generous, and sensible, in me, exists no longer; but my body is standing, and my

mournful reason contemplates without a cloud the ruin of all its illusions. Accursed be this regular and solid organization that no events can crush ! Fatal gift ! Had I then committed some crime before I was born, that I must share the malediction of the earliest man, the exile in the desert, and the injunction to live ?

This morning I passed by a country-house, that the beauty of nature had caused to be built at the foot of the mountains, and that the severity of the climate had caused to be abandoned. I stopped to enter the enclosure, attracted by the air of sadness and of decay that reigned there : I stayed there two hours, buried in the thought of my despair and isolation. And thou, also, old Jacques, thou wast a solid and pure marble, and thou camest forth, proud and stainless, from the hand of God, as a statue fresh from the master's chisel rears itself proudly on its pedestal ; but behold ! thou art like one of these wornout images, eaten into by time, yet still standing in these deserted gardens. Thou decoratest well the place of desolation : why growest thou weary of thy solitude ? Time seemeth tedious to thee, and the winter severe ; thou longest to crumble into dust, that thou mayest no more raise toward heaven thy once proud brow, now insulted by the wind, and upon which the damp air has piled black mosses like a mourning-veil. So many storms have tarnished thy splendor, that those who pass by thee no longer know whether thou art of alabaster or of clay beneath thy funereal crape. Rest, rest in thy nothingness, and no longer count the days : it may be that thou wilt endure yet a long time, miserable stone ! Thou didst make it thy glory that thou wast moulded of imperishable matter : now dost thou envy the fate of the withered reed, broken by the blast on a stormy day. But the frost doth split the marbles ; cold shall destroy thee : hope thou in it !

LXXXVIII.

Octave to Herbert.

NOTWITHSTANDING the anger of some, the remorse of others, and the uncertainty of my own mind in the midst of all this, I can not prevent myself from being happy, my dear Herbert, for my heart is filled with love, and my fate is fixed. An indissoluble affection attaches me to Fernande—do not doubt it: I am not inconstant. I may be thrust away; the woman I love, if she persist in repulsing me, may end by making me weary of her; but there is no other woman who could distract me from her before she herself had so ordered it. In spite of the immense difference in our characters, I loved Sylvia long, and struggled against her disdain long after she had ceased to love me. Fernande is quite another woman. It is she who was born for me, and whose very defects seem to have been arranged to tighten the bonds between us, and to render our intimacy necessary. I know not whether I am as criminal as Sylvia tries to make me think; but it is impossible for me not to feel that I am in love, and transported with joy. Love is selfish: it seats itself, blind and joyous, on the ruins of the world, and swoons with pleasure as well upon the bones of the dead as upon a bed of flowers. I have sacrificed the sorrow of others as I would sacrifice my own life. I no longer know anything of the laws of mine and thine. Fernande has confided herself to me, I have sworn to love her, to live and die for her; I know only this: all else is foreign to me. Jacques may come at any hour of the day or night and demand my blood, and drink it at his ease, without my disputing it with him. For the acquittal of my conscience, I offer him my naked breast:

what more can a man do ? And of what can Jacques complain ? I wear no cuirass, and I do not sleep under a bolt. Sylvia, thinking to make me fall upon my knees before her idol, reads me fragments of his letters. He begins to poetize over his grief : he is half cured. He fought bravely, and he did well. I should have done as much in his place, and, if I had had the right, I should have anticipated him. He has carefully recommended us to hide these events from his wife ; he may be at ease on this point : I charge myself with this duty. I have no desire that she should be sick again, and I watch over her as a treasure that belongs henceforth to me. I found a letter for her in the post yesterday, from Clémence. As I knew the writing very well, I opened the missive without ceremony, and found in it all the charitable warnings I had expected, with the additional news—the gratuitous falsehood, of a severe wound, which, according to her, Jacques had received in the breast. I tore up the letter, and have taken measures so that all despatches addressed to Fernande will pass through my hands on arriving. Those of Jacques shall be respected religiously, but let the others beware ! It gives me trouble enough to see her happy and sleeping upon my heart. I do not care to have an envious prude or an infamous mother come and waken her, for the pleasure of injuring us both. She is still delicate : the absence of Jacques, who seldom writes to her, and the ill-health of her son, are to her sufficient subjects of uneasiness and sorrow. My solicitude still preserves calmness and hope in her heart. Nothing will cost me too much, nothing will revolt me, in order to preserve her as long as possible from the blows that threaten her. I am selfish : I know it ; but I am so without shame and without fear. The selfishness that dissimulates and blushes for itself is a littleness and a cowardice ; that which works boldly in broad daylight is a courageous soldier who struggles against his enemies, and enriches himself with the spoils of the vanquished. He may conquer his own happiness, or defend

that of others. Who ever thought of accusing of robbery or of cruelty him who triumphs and who makes a good use of victory?

LXXXIX.

Jacques to Sylvia.

AOSTRE.

ONE must have lived my life, to know what a horrible thing isolation has become to me. Solitude I have passionately loved, but that was a very different thing. Then I was young. I had the future or the present. I have come to the mountains several times with my heart full of passions. I have peopled their wild retreats with my sentiments and with my dreams. Here I have tasted my happiness, or calmed my suffering; in fine, I have lived here. My life was going on. I left an affection to find it again, or rather I brought it here in the secrecy of my soul, to interrogate it, and to feed myself with it. Here have I shed the warm tears of hope; here have I pressed to my heart adored phantoms and spectres of fire. It is very true that I have also come hither to curse and to detest what I had loved in other times; but I loved something else, or I hoped for some other love. My bosom was rich, and I could set an idol of diamond in the place of the idol of gold that had just fallen. But now I am here with an empty and desolate heart, and, from the way in which I suffer, I see that I shall never be healed. That which is most terrible is not the want of hope, but the want of desire. My sorrow is gloomy as the peaks of ice that the sun shines upon but never melts. I know that I live no longer, and that I no more have the wish to live. These rocks and these cold caverns fill me with horror, yet I bury

myself in them like a madman who drowns himself to escape from fire. If I look afar, fear takes hold of me ; the mere sight of the horizon makes me shudder, for I fancy I see there all my memories and all my ills : and I imagine that they pursue me on rapid wings. Whither shall I go to escape them ? It would be everywhere the same. I came here with the intention of travelling, or at least of passing through the whole of this romantic country. I felt, as it were, some remains of activity, a sort of restlessness at not being really dead. And then I lingered on this rock of Saint-Bernard, and I now no longer think of quitting the cabin at which I stopped, intending to stay there but an hour. I have been here for a month, every day more inert, more indifferent, more paralyzed. I no longer feel even the atmosphere, and I am often hot when I should be cold, while at other moments the sun's ray that scorches the grass at my feet, does not quicken the circulation of my frozen blood. There are days when I walk precipitately upon the brink of abysses without thinking of danger, without feeling fatigue : I am then like a piece of mechanism that has lost its balance-wheel, and that whirls madly round, until its chain, too tensely drawn, causes the destruction of the machine. On those days, I traverse passages that the foot of man has never dared, and when I afterward perceive what I have done, I can not comprehend how I did it. Sometimes I hope that I have gone mad. But to this terrible exaltation succeed days of death. This sickly strength gives way at once, and is succeeded by a dreadful lassitude. In all this, thought is nearly effaced. I sometimes try, at night, to recall what has occupied my brain during the day, and it is impossible for me to find it. My memory presents to me nothing but the images of the material objects that have surrounded me. I see mountains, ravines, narrow bridges suspended above abysses of white vapor, and all these succeed one another, forming a chain of memories that beset me for hours together. Then I rise in the dark, and grope about my chamber, touching the walls

with my hands, and making incredible efforts to free myself from this sleepless dream. Sometimes I lie down again without having been able to chase away these images that harass me, and I wait impatiently for daylight, that I may rush, as it were against my will, into the open air. Then all is effaced : I walk at random, and I seem to be enveloped in vapors that hide from me the reality. At other times I happen to perceive that I am thinking ; in imagination I behold dreadful pictures : my son dying, my wife in the arms of another ; but I look upon it all with an imbecile indifference, until there comes to me a sort of awakening that reveals me to myself. I see myself in this picture : that woman is my wife ; I am Jacques, the forgotten lover, the outraged husband, the father without hope and without posterity ; I sit down, for my limbs can no longer bear me on, and an idea wearies me more in an instant than a day of agitation and of forced march. Two years ago I was in a deplorable state of ennui and of suffering. But what would I not give to return into the past ? I feared that I could not love again. For a long time I had not met with a woman worthy of love I was impatient and alarmed at this long slumber of my heart ; I asked myself if it were through powerlessness on my own part, and I felt that it was not. But I saw the years flying past me like dreams, and I said to myself that I had no longer any time to lose, if I would be happy once more. I thought that to win the love of a woman in marriage, would be to insure, as far as possible, the duration of this happiness ; I did not flatter myself that I should preserve it all my life ; but I hoped that it would lead me as far as that last period of youth in which philosophy becomes easy in proportion as the passions die out. It has not been thus. I am not yet old enough to detach myself from everything, and to console myself for having lost all. My hope is dead while yet in its freshness, and by a violent death ; but I am no longer young enough to believe that it can be born again. This effort is the last that my moral strength will permit.

I had created for myself a family, a home, a country; I had assembled, upon a little spot of earth, the only two beings who were dear to me, her and you. God blessed me by giving me children. That might have lasted five or six years! Our valley was so lovely! I took so much pains to make my wife happy, and she seemed to love me so passionately! But a man has come, and has destroyed all: his breath has poisoned the milk that nourished my children. Yes! I am sure of it—it was his first kiss upon Fernande's lips that killed them, as it was the first glance he threw on her that killed her love for me.

I am perhaps unjust and foolish to bear ill-will against him: perhaps she would have loved another if he had not come; perhaps she never loved me. She felt the want of giving up her heart, and she confided it to me without discernment; she mistook for a lasting passion what was only a childish caprice, or a sentiment of filial friendship that deceived her through lack of knowing what love really is. With me she suffered incessantly: she was discontented with everything; I never succeeded in producing the effect that I wished upon her mind, for she attributed to my smallest actions motives entirely opposed to the reality; either we did not understand each other, or we understood each other too clearly. During our journey into Touraine, while attempting a sacrifice beyond her strength, and while the derangement of her whole being overcame her will, she told me several times, in an insurmountable fit of nervous anger, that she had always felt that we were not made for each other. She accused me of having felt this also, and of having married her notwithstanding; she recalled to me a thousand little circumstances which she presented to me as proofs. It is true that the next day she retracted these words, which she said had escaped her in her delirium, and I feigned to have forgotten them; but they were buried in my heart like poniards, and since then I have often laid the remembrance of them upon my wounds to cauterize them.

Alas ! must the past also be renounced ? She should at least have left me that : I should have been filled with a less bitter grief. But now, everything must be destroyed and spoiled, even the remembrance of lost happiness ! If she ever really loved me, it was for a shorter time and less strongly than she has already loved him ; for she loved him from the first day—this can no longer be doubted. She deceived herself during five or six months : her age is so rich in illusions ! She thought she still loved me ; but I saw clearly where she was. She found herself surprised all at once by a new love, before she knew that the other was annihilated.

My sorrow will calm itself, I have no doubt of it ; I let it exhale, I seek not to combat it, I blush not to cry like a woman when my fits of anguish seize me. I know that I shall become tranquil and resigned ; I am not impatient for that moment : it will be yet more dreadful than the present. I shall have accepted my sentence ; I shall see my misfortune distinctly, and I shall feel it through every pore ; I shall no longer have anything of youth in my heart ; regret itself will be extinguished. Human pride will not struggle against a lost hope, against a love that withdraws itself ; it accepts its part, and, in a few days, he who was in his prime has become an old man. I still love Fernande, because a love like mine can not end without convulsions and a severe agony ; but I feel that I shall soon be no longer able to love her, and my fate will be worse. If God should work a miracle in my favor, if he should preserve my son, I could live—not with joy, but from duty, which I would devote myself to fulfil. But this poor child can only essay a languishing existence, and prolong for a while my sorrowful days : he can not reverse the decree that has unpitifully measured his own. I must wait for him, this poor insect that creeps slowly toward the grave, and without whom I must not depart. I remember that I once said to you, “ What is the worst that can happen to an honest

man? To be forced to die, that is all." To-day, I see that there is something yet worse: it is, to be forced to live.

X C.

Sylvia to Jacques.

JACQUES! come back; Fernande needs you: she is sick again, because she has just experienced a great sorrow. Nothing can calm her. She calls for you with anguish; she says that all the evils that happen to her come from your having forsaken her; that you were her Providence, and that you have abandoned her. She is terrified at your long absence, and says that it must be that you are informed of everything, or you would not thus have taken a horror against your family and your home. She fears that you hate her, and the sorrow that this idea causes her, resists all our attempts to console her: she wishes to die, because, she says, there can not be one instant of repose or of hope upon earth for any one who has possessed your affection and has lost it. Take courage, Jacques, and come and suffer here. You are still necessary; let this thought give you strength. There are around you beings who still need you; and therefore your life is not finished. Is there, then, nothing else besides love? The friendship that Fernande has for you is stronger than the love with which Octave inspires her. All his cares and all his devotion, which have really lasted beyond my hope, fail to console her when you are in question. Can it be otherwise? Can she venerate another man as she venerates you? Come back and live again among us. Do you count me for nothing in your life? Have I not loved you truly? have I ever injured you? do you not know that

you are my first and almost my only affection ? Surmount the horror that Octave causes you : this will be the work of a day. I also have suffered in accustoming myself to see him in your place ; but leave it to him, and take a better one : be the friend and the father, the consoler and the stay of the family. Are you not above a vain and selfish jealousy ? Take back your wife's heart—leave the rest to this young man ! It may be that the imagination and the senses of Fernande require a love less elevated than that with which you wished to inspire her. You have resigned yourself to this sacrifice : resign yourself to witness it, and let generosity silence self-love. Is it a few caresses more or less that can keep alive or destroy an affection as holy as yours ? This childish jealousy is unworthy of your great soul, and you have on your forehead many white hairs that give you the right to be the father of your wife, without derogating from the dignity of your part as a husband. You can not doubt the delicacy with which Fernande will avoid all that might wound you. Octave himself will become supportable to you : there is, after all, something noble in his character ; and during these last three months, so difficult for us all, I have discovered in him virtues upon which I had not counted. He would fall at your feet if you explained yourself to him, if he comprehended you, and knew what you are. Return, then, and wipe away Fernande's tears, for you only can bring back something of courage and calmness to her heart. She has again been stricken by one of those sorrows for which love has no consolation : you alone have the right to comfort her, for her misfortune is yours also. You comprehend what has happened ? I expect you !

XCI.

Jacques to Sylvia.

GENEVA.

I WILL come, but I wish you to give notice of my arrival several days beforehand; I do not wish to take any one by surprise. It would be horrible to me to find an expression of embarrassment or of alarm on Fernande's face. Tell her to constrain herself, if it be necessary, that she may not let me see anything of what is going on. Make her still believe that I am entirely without suspicion, and persuade her to be careful to keep me in this confidence. No, I do not feel strong enough to witness their love: I am not a stoical philosopher, and a soul of fire still burns beneath the white hairs upon my brow. What you are now doing is very cruel, Sylvia; I was almost buried, and you recall me to the world of the living, to suffer some days longer, and to insure to me the necessity of quitting it again and for ever. Be it so: Fernande suffers; she needs me, you say. I doubt it, but I feel that I should not die in peace if I had neglected to soften one of her pains. It is the last that will reach her; she will have nothing more to lose: deprived of her children, and released from her husband, she will be able to abandon herself to her love without any drawback and without fear. That intimacy which you think still possible between us, is a romantic dream: even if I should forget my resentment, could they forget the wrong they have done me? The sight of a man whom one has rendered unhappy is insupportable; it is like the corpse of the enemy one has killed.

I shall be with you two days after this letter. I shall behold again, then, that fatal house! I comprehend what has happened: my son is dead.

XCII.

Octave to *Fernande*.

LYONS.

I HAVE submitted to your order, and I think also that it was right for me to do so; but I will go no further: ten leagues are quite sufficient to put silence and peace between him and me. But of what are you afraid for me? Do you suppose that Jacques thinks of taking vengeance on my happiness? He is too generous or too wise for that. I have consented to withdraw myself because my presence might be disagreeable to him; his would make me suffer less than he thinks; I can not charge myself with being guilty of any real wrongs toward him: he might have prevented me from being so; he had the right and the strength on his side. I have not committed a robbery in profiting by the treasure he left to me. Is one culpable because one struggles with beings indifferent to the harm one does them, or too magnificent to deign to perceive it? If Jacques be as sublime in this as you think, it is an additional reason why I should see him with pleasure, and why I should give him the frankest shake of the hand that I ever gave him in my life. I understand nothing of these subtleties of sentiment—false ideas with which you surround yourself to your torture, as if you were not unhappy enough already, my poor child! Weep for the cruel losses with which fate has afflicted you; I weep for them with you, and nothing will ever console me for the death of your daughter, not even O my *Fernande*! not even that event which you add to the sum of your sorrows, and which I consider as a blessing from Heaven—as a pledge of reconciliation between Him and me. Let my heart leap with joy at this idea; let me form

a thousand dreams, a thousand delightful projects. It shall be called Blanche, like her who is dead, for it too will be a girl: it will have the pretty look and the fair hair of the little angel that resembled you so much. You will see that it will be just like her—as beautiful, as caressing, as capricious, but stronger; for the children of love never die: God endows them with longer life and more vigor than those of marriage; because he knows that they will need more strength in order to resist the evils of a life in which they meet so cold a welcome. Will you regret, then, that this should be true of your child? Will you weep over it, instead of embracing it, when it comes into the world? Ah! if you receive it with grief, if you repulse it, if you refuse to love it, because it will not have Jacques for its father, leave it to me, and let Providence abandon it; I will take charge of it: I will receive it into my bosom, I will feed it myself with milk and fruits, like the hermits in those old chronicles that we were reading the other day together. It shall lie by my side, and shall go to sleep to the sound of my flute; it shall be reared by me: it shall have the talents that you love, and the virtues that you would need to find in your child in order to make you happy; and when he shall be of an age to keep his secret and ours, he shall go and embrace you; he shall say to you, “I am called Octave, and I need no other name: that of your husband would be less dear to me, and would be of no use to me. I respect and esteem you; you did not insure my social existence by a lie; you have not given me for a master a man to whom I am nothing; it is my father who has brought me up, and who has taught me to do without riches and protection. I want nothing but tenderness: give me yours; I will never call you my mother, but a kiss from you in secret upon my forehead will make me know all the joys of filial love.” Tell me, when he speaks to you thus, will you repulse him? will you be sorry to have this additional friend? The only trouble he will cause you will be the hiding of his existence from

your husband. For the present and for the future this seems to me a thing so easy, that I can not imagine why you are troubled about it. Will you suffer from not being able to avow and produce your child? But remember that Jacques is double your age, my dear Fernande; you can not hide from yourself that you ought to outlive him many years, and that a time will come, in the order of nature, when you will be free. Even before this presumable epoch, how many accidents, how many chances may permit us to marry! Do you imagine that in ten years' time, in twenty, as to-day, I shall not still be at your feet, and that my greatest happiness will not be to say to society, "This woman is mine; I conquered her by my prayers, by my obstinacy, by my faults, by my love; and if I have stained her reputation, at least I have not abandoned her as others do. I have remained at her side; I have allowed my life to flow on entirely at the will of her husband, who certainly knew how to fight, and who might have come and killed me at any moment in his wife's arms. I have remained there, in order to satisfy the resentment of the one, or to protect the other in case of need; I have consecrated every instant to her who one day sacrificed herself to me. I began by obtaining her by force of persecutions; but I ended by deserving her by force of tenderness: now she belongs to me legitimately. Let men ratify this union that they have combated in vain!"

You know very well, Fernande, that this is very sure, as far as I am concerned; Providence can do the rest, and it will do it, do not doubt it. It was our destiny to meet, to comprehend each other, and to love. Chance ends by submitting itself to love; attractive force surmounts every obstacle: and the loadstone hastens to embrace the iron in the entrails of the earth, in spite of the rock that separates them. Poor trembling woman, throw thyself, then, into my arms; I will protect thee against the whole universe! Poor desolate mother, dry thy tears; the children that we shall have together will not die!

Come back to hope ; remember the beautiful days we have had together in the midst of your greatest anxieties ; remember the miracles that love accomplishes. When we are in each other's arms, are we not lost in a world of delights, where the cries and complainings of earth do not reach us ? Be sure, moreover, that you do not cause your husband all the pain you think : he is too superior a man to allow himself to be affected by the insults of stupidity ; he knows that they can not reach him, and he certainly does not think that we would amuse ourselves with exposing him to them. He knows perhaps that we love, or at least he suspects it : and do you not see that it does not make him angry ? He is a calm and reasonable man ; more than that, he is an excellent man : if he knew your anxieties, he would console you, he would reassure you as to your fears, and I bet you that he will do so some day. Two or three years longer, and he will be old, and the egotism of the forsaken lover will have given place to the generosity of the consoled friend. At present he travels, and keeps at a distance, because our position is difficult to us all, and our intercourse painful in each other's presence. Time will efface these repugnances perhaps more quickly than we hope : the future seems to be beyond our grasp, but time works on with a rapidity that astonishes us when we see his work accomplished. Give yourself up, then, to love : he will always be the master ; your resistance serves only to diminish the joys he gives you. Oh ! they are so beautiful and so intoxicating ! Respect them as sacred gifts from Heaven ; labor to preserve them from the injuries of fate, who is stupid and blind, and who, so far from accepting him as he is, must be governed with strength and courage. Fear not lest Jacques should reproach you : if he knew how irresistible is our love, how immense our happiness, he would permit us to enjoy it. Reply to me quickly ; tell me if Jacques is going to remain a long time. I have my whole life, I hope, to pass with you, and yet I can not submit without

sorrow to lose a week. You know that I could submit to a long exile, if Jacques and you together required it; but now it would perhaps seem to him that I fled from him: if he ask for me, tell him that I am at Lyons; above all, send me news of yourself, and take care of what is dearest to me in the world.

XCIII.

Bernande to Octave.

JACQUES is going very soon, but he wishes to see you before he goes. You are right, Octave, he is an excellent man: it would be impossible to have more sweetness, delicacy, and reasonableness. I see plainly that he knows all. I was on the point of confessing everything, so much did I suffer from what seemed to me an excess of confidence and esteem; but at the first word he gave me to understand that he did not wish to know anything more: and he showed toward me a friendship so true, an indulgence so unbounded, that I am filled with tenderness and gratitude. You had judged correctly with respect to his intentions, and to the position of us all, my dear Octave. He has reflected seriously upon the difference in our ages, and has certainly vanquished the remains of love that he had for me; for he has said to me exactly what you wrote in your letter. He told me that *certain reasons* obliged him to keep at a distance from us, in order that the world might not believe that he gave his countenance to our love. "And what do you think of this love?" I asked him; "do you think it is a calumny?" I was trembling and ready to fall at his feet. He pretended not to perceive my agitation, and replied, "I am very sure that it is a calumny." But I saw that he knew how things stood, and his tranquillity freed my heart from an enormous

weight. Jacques is kind and affectionate ; but he reasons : he is no longer young, he knows that I am excusable, and, as you say, his natural generosity is seconded by the wisdom of his reflections. He leads me to hope that he will return every year and pass some weeks with us, and that, in a few years, he will quit us no more.

Your letter would have decided me to keep the secret of my pregnancy, even had Jacques not aided me to be silent as to all the rest. I confide in you, and abandon myself to you. You well know that I could never have the impudence to profit by the law that would force Jacques to give his name and his property to the child of our love—still less could I have the baseness to seek his caresses in order to deceive him as to the legitimacy of our child : you would rather have killed me than have permitted it, would you not ? And you will receive it, you will hide it, you will take care of it, this beloved child ! We will give it in charge to some honest peasant-woman, very clean and very faithful, who shall nurse it, and we will go and see it every day. Ah ! whatever be my fate, and under whatever circumstances it comes into the world, be sure that I will love it as well as those that are no more, and even better, perhaps, because of what I have suffered in losing them ! If Jacques should some day discover the birth of this one, he will not hate it, he will not persecute it. Who knows how far his goodness will go ? He is capable of all that is strange and sublime. . . . But how happy I am that his generosity does not cost him as much as I thought ! I could never have tranquillized myself, never have loved you without the torments of remorse, if I had seen that Jacques' noble heart must be broken. Happily, he has passed the age of ardent passions ; and besides, he has always said to me—and he then knew very well what he was saying — “ When you can no longer permit me to be your lover, I will become your father.” He has kept his word. O my dear Octave ! we will never pass a night together without kneeling down and praying for Jacques.

And you! how kind you are, and how well you know how to love! Oh! I have never loved but you! I thought I loved Jacques, but it was only a holy friendship, for it bore no resemblance to what I feel for you. What transports are yours, and how incessantly do you occupy yourself with me! what solicitude! what devotion! you are not my husband, and you consecrate your life to me; my tears and my weakness do not dishearten you: you reproach me for none of my faults. Neither does Jacques. He also is very kind; but he is not my equal, my comrade, my brother, and my lover, like you. He is not a child as we are, and then he has other things in life besides love: solitude, travelling, study, reflection—he loves all these; and we—we love only each other. Let us love him also, this friend so perfect; come and see him. He wishes—so he has told me—to give you a shake of the hand before he goes away again. I asked him, with a little uneasiness, if he had anything to say to you. “No,” he answered; “but why does he go away when I come? what reason has he for fleeing me?” I told him that you had gone to see Herbert, who was coming from Paris, and who was passing through Lyons on his way back to Switzerland. “Write to him quickly to come,” said he, “and if Herbert be still in Lyons, let him bring him: we will pass one good day again all together, as in other times; that will do you good.” Brave Jacques!

P. S.—This morning I had a strange fright about a very trifling circumstance. I had left your letter open upon the writing-table in my dressing-room, without locking the door. Jacques never dreamed, in all his life, of looking at my papers. He has been, in this respect, so religiously scrupulous, that I have never acquired the habit of being prudent. I made this reflection, I hardly know how, while walking in the park with Sylvia. I asked myself, all at once, where Jacques could be: and the thought that he might be in my dressing-room troubled me so much, that I left the park and

ran to the house. I went up stairs without finding Jacques, and I entered my room. There was no one there, and nothing had been disturbed on my writing-table. Reassured, but still trembling, I sat down, and took up this letter to fold it and lock it up. I found a drop of water, quite fresh, upon the last lines. I fancied that it might be a tear, and I almost fainted from emotion and terror. However, I took courage on seeing other drops of water on the papers beside it, fallen from a bunch of roses all wet with the rain, that I had put into a vase beside the papers. But then, see my childishness, and the state of imbecile weakness to which grief and uneasiness have reduced my poor head! I fancied that the drop of water upon the letter was warm, and that the others were cold. I can see you laughing here at this folly: the fact is, it took possession of me so suddenly, that I uttered a cry. I heard Jacques' voice calling to me from the saloon, asking me what was the matter, and he came up in great haste, looking quite terrified, supposing that I was having an attack of nervousness. I confess to you that I came very near it. However, Jacques' countenance reassured me, and he brought me to life again by telling me that he wished you would come and see him, and all the other things that I have already related to you. I see clearly that the terror I have just experienced was the work of a sickly imagination. Have I not fallen into a very ridiculous state? Come back! a kiss from you will do me more good than anything else; and when I see your hand within that of Jacques, I shall be quite tranquil.

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XCIV.

Jacques to Sylvia.

GENEVA.

My dear and beloved friend, I have journeyed to this place in company with Herbert. You imagined that I should leave him at Lyons : not at all. His society has not been in any way painful to me : we have spoken constantly of you. You must have perceived that he is in love with you. I have examined him, and questioned him, in a way that has enabled me to become thoroughly acquainted with him. He is a worthy fellow, simple, loyal, obliging, sincere. He has a good fortune, an agreeable dwelling in the country that you love, and his occupations preserve his mind from the vexations peculiar to men of limited activity. He has desired me to present to you his offer of marriage, and I advise you to accept him : not now—I comprehend that you are not disposed to think of it at present—but sometime hence. You will never be made happy by love, Sylvia. You will seek a long while for a being worthy of you, and, if you find him, you will have the same fate as I : it will be too late ; your heart will be too old for you to be loved long. Besides, there is too complete a discord between our manner of being and that of all other men, for us ever to be able to find our like in this world. And yet there is but one thing in life, and that is love. But love, above all in the hearts of women, may be of two sorts—love for a man, and maternal love. I would have lived for my children, unfortunate as I am. They are dead ! It is an accident that kills me. But you may rear yours, and, sheltered from all the ills that overwhelm me, be happy through them. From the way in which you cherished and took care of mine, it was easy to

see that you would be a sublime mother. Be a mother, then : marry Herbert. It will be enough that you have esteem and friendship for him. He is worthy of this. He is one of those beautiful calm natures that know neither the transport of the passions, nor their fatal sufferings. He will not ask of you more affection than you are disposed to give him, and, when you know him, you will not give him less than he deserves. You will have a tranquil and patriarchal life. You are a veritable Ruth, active, courageous, and devoted, like the strong women of the beautiful old times in the Bible ; you will make a holy holocaust of your unrealized dreams and vain desires, and you will divide among your sons the love that you have not been able to give to a man. Do not take from me this hope, and let me carry it with me to the grave. It came to me the other day, when we were dining at our hunting-rendezvous. I had risen for an instant ; I came back, and contemplated the two couples seated on the grass—Octave and Fernande, Herbert and you : Herbert followed your slightest movements with solicitude ; he watched every glance, in order to find an opportunity of rendering you some little service, and of hearing you say, "*Thank you, Herbert.*" The two other lovers were radiant with happiness, and I joyfully do them justice : they loaded me all day with testimonies of friendship and delicate caresses. A divine calm descended for an instant into my heart, on seeing that you were all happy, or that, at least, you might be so. Oh ! what a strange and solemn day ! it was an eternal adieu between you all and me ! Who would have thought it ? There were moments in which I forgot it myself, and in which I was carried back to our old happiness, so as to fancy that all that has taken place since then was a dream. The weather was so fine, the grass so green, the birds sang so sweetly, Fernande looked so lovely with those pale roses that blossom again of themselves upon her face, after a few days of suffering ! I slept for a quarter of an hour on the turf before dinner, and, when I awakened, she was beside

me, and chased the insects from my forehead with her bouquet of wild flowers ; Octave sang a duet with Herbert ; you were preparing the fruits for the dessert ; and my dogs were sleeping at my feet. It was a picture of rustic happiness so fresh and so peaceful, that I contemplated it for some time without calling to mind the necessity of dying. But when this thought came back to me in the midst of all that !

I am very calm, but I still suffer a good deal ; I have told you so a thousand times : you persist in making a hero of me, and you invite me to live as though I had the strength to do so. Remember that a few days ago I loved, and that I should be furious if I were not annihilated. And besides, you have not read those two letters of Octave and Fernande ! I read them, and they were my death-warrant. I saw how much my life costs them, notwithstanding their esteem and their friendship for me. Ingenuous lovers ! They artlessly desire that I should die, and tell each other so without perceiving it ! They have very legitimate reasons for this—reasons that I respect, but that have filled my veins with ice. Fernande is no longer my wife, she is Octave's ; she is a being who no longer makes part of myself, and whom I could no longer press in my arms if even she threw herself into them sincerely. She is now really my daughter, and any other thought would seem to me like incest. Tell me then no longer that she may return to me, and that I may forget all : she is the mother of Octave's children. I neither hate nor despise her for this ; but it makes our eternal separation necessary.

It was the hand of God that put these letters under my eyes. I was perhaps about to lose and degrade myself : I was about to accept the false and impossible part that you had dreamed for me ; shaken by your romantic eloquence, touched by Fernande's tears and her humble entreaties, I was about to promise her to pass the remainder of my days between her and her lover. Every moment I was ready to say to her, "I know all, and I forgive you both : be my

daughter, and let Octave be my son ; let me grow old between you two ; and let the presence of an unhappy friend, welcomed and consoled by you, call down the benediction of Heaven upon your love !” This ray of hope, this illusion of a few hours, which shone upon my last day before abandoning me to eternal night—was it not a refinement of suffering ? To catch a glimpse of a corner of the sky when one is condemned to go down alive into the grave ! But no matter : I am very glad to have made all these reflections, and every possible effort to attach myself again to life ; I shall die without regret. Destiny led me to enter the room where this sentence was written. I was about to look for ink and paper to write to Octave to return ; and, in bending over the table, I saw his writing, and my eyes encountered this terrible phrase, that clung to my eyeballs like fire : “ *The children that we shall have together will not die.*” I wished to know my fate ; I felt that ordinary considerations of delicacy should be laid aside in presence of the oracle of destiny ; and, moreover, incapable as I know myself to be of injuring Fernande, I might, without scruple, violate her secrets. Without this, I should have lost my road, and should have entered upon a new series of evils that would have conducted me to precisely where I now am, but less courageous and less pure than I am to-day. Yes ! I did well to read : you have seen my conduct immediately afterward. My part was very soon taken, and from this moment the serenity of despair has been in my soul and upon my face.

He is right : their children will not die ; nature blesses and caresses the loved one ; cold and death are spread over him who is beloved no longer. All things abandon him, and the very plants wither beneath the hand of the accursed ; life withdraws from him, and the coffin opens to receive him—him and the firstborn of his love ; the air that he breathes is poisoned, and men flee from him : “ This unhappy creature,” say they, “ will never die !”

These letters have dictated to me my duty : I see what must be said to Fernande in order to console and to cure her ; *he* knows it—he knows her now better than I do. I have realized all that he promised her on my part. I have conformed to the character which he supposes to be mine, and I have seen that, in fact, all that Fernande desired was, to be delivered from my love. When I told her that it was extinguished, I saw that she took in a new life, and her eyes seemed to say to me, “ I can now love Octave at my ease.”

Let her love him then ! A man less unhappy than myself might perhaps have found an opportunity of sacrificing himself to the object of his love, and of being recompensed in his last hour by the benedictions of those whom he had made happy ; but my fate is such that I must hide myself to die. My suicide would look like a reproach : it would poison the future that I leave to them ; it would perhaps render it impossible ; for, after all, Fernande is an angel of kindness, and her heart, sensitive to the slightest attacks, might break under the weight of such a remorse. Besides, the world would curse her, and, after having pursued me with its ferocious banterings during my life, it would pursue my widow with its blind maledictions after my death. I know how things go : a pistol-shot through the head makes a hero or a saint of him who was despised and detested the day before. I have a horror of this ridiculous apotheosis. I have too much disdain for the men among whom I have lived to call them to my death-agony as to a spectacle ; none shall know why I die : I wish not that they who survive me should be accused, and I would not that my memory should be forgiven.

I wished to see Octave before I left, and assure myself with my own eyes that I might bequeath to him what is dearest to me in the world. He is a man of a strange selfishness, but he knows how to make a virtue of this vice, and his boldness pleases me. I hope that he will

make her happy. He embraced me with effusion when I went away, and she also. They were very well contented !

XCV.

Epître to Jacques.

I now no longer flatter myself, and your despair has passed into my soul ; but yours is august and resigned, and mine is gloomy and bitter. It is all over, then : your part is taken ! O God ! O God ! a man like Jacques is about to immolate himself, and thou workest no miracle to prevent him ! Thou wilt allow this sublime and holy life to fall into the gulf of eternity, as a grain of sand into the ocean ; it will go out pell-mell with those of villains and cowards, and the whole creation revolts not against thee that thou refusest not the sacrifice ! Your unhappy destiny will make an atheist of me to my last breath, O Jacques !

You speak to me of the future, of happiness, of marriage, of maternity ! But you do not know, then no, you can not know my friendship, if you imagine that I can survive you. Were it only through indignation, I hate life henceforth ; I hate it even more than you do : for you accept your fate, and I revolt against Heaven and against men who have made it what it is. I hate Octave, and I can not look my sister in the face ; I flee from her, so much do I fear lest I should hate her also. See how she has comprehended you, the woman whom you have loved ! and see the man whom she has preferred to you ! Yes, they are made for each other—they are right : let them love, and let them sleep upon your tomb ; it shall be their nuptial-couch.

But why must you die ? From the moment in which they

desire your death, are you not freed from all duty toward them? Because they have formed a guilty thought, you offer yourself to God as a victim to expiate their crime! What will become of the love of justice and of faith in Providence in the hearts of men, if the highest among them condemn and immolate themselves thus to wash away the faults of the lowest? Can you not abandon for ever this accursed Europe; in which the evils of your fate have taken root, and seek some land, unstained by your tears, in which you can begin a new life? Is it really true that you have nothing more in your heart, not even friendship for me, who would follow you to the ends of the earth? Ah! this friendship that has filled my whole soul, and that has always stifled the love that I might have conceived for other men, has never sufficed for you: you came to me to repose and to be consoled, but you soon returned to this life of stormy passions that has ended by crushing you. Now that your passions are dead, can you not live peacefully, and grow old with your sister under some beautiful sky, in some of the enchanting solitudes of the New World? Come, let us go; let us forget all that we have suffered: you, through having loved too well—and I, through not having been able to love enough. If you choose, we will adopt some orphan: we will imagine it to be our child, and we will bring it up in our principles. We will bring up two of different sexes, and some day we will marry them together in the sight of God, with no other temple than the desert, no other priest than love; we shall have formed their souls to truth and justice, and perhaps there will be, thanks to us! one pure and happy couple upon the face of the earth.

Ah! let me form these dreams, and do you form them with me! There ought to be something in life besides love. You say not. How can it have happened that a man like you, gifted with every talent, wise in all sciences, rich in ideas and memories of every kind, has never been willing to live except through the heart? Can you not take refuge in

the life of the intellect? Why are you not a poet, a man of learning, a politician, or a philosopher? These are existences that advancing age renders every day more beautiful and more complete. Why must you, at thirty-seven, die of the despair of a young man? O Jacques! it is because your soul is too ardent: it will not grow old; it would rather be broken than extinguished. Too modest to undertake to enlighten men through science, too proud to be willing to shine by your talent in the eyes of beings so little capable of comprehending you, too just and too pure to wish to reign over them through intrigue or through ambition, you have not known what to do with the riches of your organization. God should have created an angel expressly for you, and have sent you both to live alone in some other world; he should, at least, have caused you to be born in those times when faith and divine love served to enlighten and regenerate the nations. You should have had some task, at once immense, heroic, humble, and enthusiastic—a life of holy tears and of philanthropic suffering—a destiny like that of Christ.

But when a man like you is born in an age in which there is nothing for him to do; when, with his apostle-soul and his martyr-strength, he must walk, mutilated and suffering, among men without heart and without aim, who vegetate through some insignificant page of history, he stifles, he dies in this corrupted air, in this stupid crowd that press upon and crush him without seeing him. Detested by the wicked, jeered at by fools, feared by the envious, forsaken by the weak, he must yield, and return to God, wearied with having labored in vain, sad at having accomplished nothing. The world remains vile and odious: this is what is called the triumph of human reason.

You have made me swear to stay with your wife until she shall be consoled for your death; you forced this oath from me: can you not release me from it? Will it be in my power to keep it when I know that the day has come, and

that you are approaching your last hour? Think you, Jacques, that I will not leave everything, to go and share with you the poison or the balls? You make me smile with this demand of Herbert! Remember that you have sworn, on your part, not to execute your resolution without informing me beforehand, and giving me time to go and embrace you for the last time.

XCVI.

Jacques to Sylvia.

THE MOUNTAINS OF THE TYROL.

CALM your sorrow, my beloved sister: it awakens mine, but makes no change in my resolution. When a man's life is hurtful to some, burdensome to himself, useless to all, suicide is a legitimate act, and he may accomplish it, if not without regret at having failed in the purpose of his life, at least without remorse for having put an end to it. You make me out to be much greater and more virtuous than I am; but there is something profoundly true in what you say of the sadness experienced by a soul that is full of useless good intentions and of wasted devotion, when forced to abandon its task without having fulfilled it. My conscience reproaches me with nothing, and I feel that it is permitted me to lay myself down in my grave and rest from life. I crossed, a few days since, a field of battle in which, fifteen years ago, I found myself, for the first time, in the midst of blood, fire, and dust; I was then young, and a brilliant career was opening before me, if I could have profited by it. It was a time of glory and of intoxication to my companions. I remember that I passed the night of the watch

upon one of those thatched roofs on a level with the ground, that serve as barn and sheepfold, at the foot of the mountains. I was half way up the side of the hill; there was beneath my eyes a magnificent arena: the French camp at my feet, the enemy's fires in the distance, and Napoleon, general, in the midst of all this. I made many reflections upon the destiny that offered itself to me, and upon this man of genius who commanded so many destinies. I found myself cold amid these bloody toils and this mournful glory; the only one, perhaps, in the whole army, who did not regret that he was not Napoleon. I accepted the horrors of war with that strength of soul that reason gives to those who can not draw back; but on galloping, next morning, over those skulls that were crushed beneath my horse's feet, those bodies that were still groaning, I felt myself penetrated by so profound a hatred of the men who called that *glory*, and with so insurmountable an aversion for these hideous scenes, that an eternal paleness spread itself over my face, and my exterior took that icy reserve that it has never lost. From that day my spirit was turned back upon itself: I made a sort of scission with my kind: I fought with a despair and a repugnance that they called *sang-froid*, and respecting which I never entered into any explanation with them; for those brutes could not have comprehended that there was among them a man who loved not the sight and the smell of blood. I saw them prostrate themselves before him whose ambition opened so many arteries, and fed itself upon so many tears; and when I saw him marching over the dead amid clouds of vultures that he was fattening on human flesh, I longed to assassinate him, that I might be cursed and massacred by his adorers.

No: genius without goodness, without love, without devotion, has never seduced nor tempted me. "I will go and live at the feet of a woman," I said to myself, "and I will love one of those weak and sensitive beings who faint at sight of a drop of blood." I sought for weakness, and I

found it; but weakness kills strength, because weakness wishes to enjoy and to live, and strength knows how to renounce and to die.

Do not curse these two lovers who will profit by my death. They are not guilty: they love each other. There is no crime where there is sincere love. They are selfish, and they are perhaps worth all the more for being so. Those who have no self-love are useless to themselves and to others. He who would not be out of place in society must love life and be determined to be happy in spite of everything. What is called virtue in society, is the art of satisfying oneself without openly interfering with others, and without drawing troublesome enmities upon oneself. Well! why hate humanity because it is such? It is God who has given to it this instinct, in order that it may labor for its own preservation. In the great mould in which he shapes all the types of human organization, he has given to some a more austere and a more reflective temperament than to others. He has created these in such a manner as that they can not live for themselves, and are incessantly tormented by the need of acting to secure the prosperity of the common mass. These are the stronger wheels that he interlocks among the complicated wheelwork of the great machine. But there are times when the machine is so fatigued and so worn out, that nothing can make it work again, and God, tired of it, strikes it with his foot, and breaks it to pieces, in order to form it anew. In these times, there are many men who are useless, and who will live and love if they can—who will die if they be not beloved, and if they grow weary.

You reproach me with not having loved you enough. At the moment of death, all may be spoken. I will ask you to remark (it is for the first and the last time) that we were in a delicate position with regard to each other. You, of all the beings I have ever met, are the one toward whom I have been drawn by the most ardent sympathy. But you are young and beautiful, and I have never known that you were

my sister. This idea never occurred to you ; you accepted me as your brother : and even when your mother, who does not know it herself, told you that I was not, our destiny had long ago been fixed for both of us, and we could love each other only in the past. If we had known earlier, and in a surer way, that we might have been a man and a woman to each other, our lives would both have been very different ; but the uncertainty would have rendered the mere idea of this happiness odious to us both. I made, therefore, the absolute and eternal sacrifice of this dream, the first time that I suspected the possibility of my cherishing it ; and I extinguished in my heart a part of my friendship, for fear lest I might allow my conscience to go astray. What might not have passed between us, if we had not been a little stronger than Octave and Fernande ? when it depended on an uncertain or evil word of Madame de Theursan to plunge us into horrible anxieties ! Forgive me, then, this excessive prudence that you have never comprehended nor perceived, because your soul, calmer than mine, did not require it on your part. Thanks to it, I die pure, and my heart has not been sullied by one single thought that God would have hated or chastised.

And now, reflect, O my friend ! that you can not follow me to the tomb. However disgusted you may be with life, however lonely my death may make you, you can not share it without sullyng your memory and my own with the accusation that has been brought against us during our lives. The world would not fail to say that you were my mistress, and that it was the despair of love that made us commit suicide in each other's arms. You know how suspicious Octave is, how weak is Fernande : they themselves would believe it. Ah ! at least let us leave my memory to them without stain, and let them respect me when I shall be no more—when this respect will no longer cost them anything.

But do not accuse me of not having known you, O my Sylvia, my sister before God ! I have told you a hundred

times there is no one but yourself in the world who has never done me aught but good. You alone understood me, you alone thought as I did. It seemed as though one soul animated us, and that the noblest part of it had fallen to your share. As you have preferred me to your lovers, so should I have preferred you to my mistresses, if I had not feared, in abandoning myself to so lively an affection, that I might go further than I wished. You—you tranquilly gave yourself up to it, beautiful soul, ever calm and ever firm ! You were the diamond, and I the stone that protects it : my desires and my transports have always placed between us, as a safeguard, a mistress who received my caresses, but who did not prevent my veneration from reascending evermore to you. You see how I trust to your word, and how entire is my esteem : I dare to reveal to you all the weaknesses, all the sufferings of my heart ! Since I have known you, I have had you for my confidant and consoler ; and, before I knew you, I never confided in any one. Be my last hope in the world I am leaving ; from the depths of my grave my soul will return to seek with solicitude for tidings of the happiness of those I leave behind. Watch over your sister. I confide her to you : if you wish me to die in peace, let me carry with me the assurance that you will never abandon her, you who are full of reason, and whose friendship is worth more than the love of others.

XCVII.

Jacques to Sylvia.

THE GLACIERS OF RUNS.

THIS morning is so beautiful, the sky so pure, and all nature so serene, that I would profit by it to finish my sad existence in peace. I have just written to Fernande in such a manner as to prevent her for ever from suspecting that I have come to my end through suicide. I speak to her of my speedy return, of hope, and of calmness ; I even enter into some domestic details, and impart to her several projects for the improvement of our house, in order that she may believe me far removed from despair, and may attribute my death to an accident. You alone are the depositary of this secret, upon which depends all her future happiness : burn all my letters, or place them in such security that they will be destroyed with you in case of your death. Be prudent and strong in your sorrow : remember that I must not have died in vain. I leave my inn, and I shall never enter it again. Perhaps I shall not kill myself before to-morrow, or for several days ; but I shall never be seen again. My soul is resigned, but still suffering ; and I die sad—sad as one who has for his refuge only a feeble hope of heaven. I shall ascend to the summit of the glaciers, and will pray from the depths of my heart : it may be that faith and enthusiasm will descend upon me in that solemn hour, when, detaching myself from men and from life, I shall leap into the abyss, raising my hands toward Heaven and crying with fervor, “ O justice, justice of God ! ”

Note by the Editor.

AFTER the letter addressed to Fernande, of which Jacques here speaks, and which reached Saint-Léon at the same time with this note to Sylvia, nothing more was heard of him ; and the mountaineers with whom he had lodged notified the authorities of the canton that a stranger had disappeared, leaving his portmanteau in their house. Their investigations led to no discovery of his fate ; and the examination of his papers presenting no indication of his project of suicide, his disappearance was attributed to an accidental death. He had been seen to take the path to the glaciers, and to plunge into the deepest of the snow : it was presumed that he had fallen into one of those fissures that are met with among the blocks of ice, and which are sometimes several hundred feet in depth.

THE END.

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3. The cultivation of *right habits* in youth is more essential than the inculcation of mere knowledge; and the prime object of education should not be so much to give the pupil knowledge, as to teach him how to acquire it, and rightly to employ the faculties with which he has been endowed.

4. HABITS being but the *acquired trades* of the mind, it becomes evident that *self-improvement* — which is really the only improvement that is truly valuable and ennobling — can only be promoted by the right use of proper appliances.

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6. The greater the number of the senses and faculties which are brought to bear upon the object under investigation, the more easily will its acquaintance be acquired and retained.

7. SELF-CONTROL may become a cheerful and voluntary exercise, if made habitual by the presentation of proper motives; and it is exceedingly essential in the process of self-improvement. Consequently, right *moral* instruction and discipline should be *first* and paramount to all others.

8. PRIZES and REWARDS are unnecessary, and are generally injurious stimulants to the acquisition of knowledge, and can rarely, if ever be used, without depraving the social and moral affections; but, instead of them, a moderate degree of APPROBATION, which *all* may have and enjoy, as they merit, for mental and moral attainments, and which may, perhaps, be expressed in some *tangible form*, with which, also, *instruction may be blended*, is healthful in its tendency; and, when added to *congenial employments and exercises*, may be all that will be needed for successfully reaching and bringing forward the uninterested scholar.

9. In making use of "rank and station," or "grade of scholarship," it should be made possible for *all* to rank *number one*; that the rank of one pupil should not displace that of another: thus placing no bar to the social feelings, or the desire to promote social improvement. *Each should have equal approbation, or credit, when each has done all that can reasonably be required.*

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From the Committee of the Board of Education.

SCHENECTADY, October 12, 1846.

DEAR SIR: In compliance with a resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Lancaster School Society, of this city, we have examined, with as much care as the time allowed would permit us to bestow, the series of GRAMMATIC READERS (Nos. I., II., and III.), of Mr. EDWARD HAZEN; and, from such examination, are enabled to say, that the series is well adapted to attain the object Mr. Hazen has had in view in its preparation, viz.: that of enabling the scholar to *understand* the English language while learning to read it.

With the gradations, and systematic and illustrative arrangement, of the Readers, we are much pleased, and believe they will prove to be a very valuable aid to Teachers of Common Schools, in instructing and interesting their scholars in that branch of learning to which the series is devoted.

We shall not only report in favor of authorizing the introduction of the Grammatic Readers into the schools under the care of the trustees, but shall recommend their introduction as speedily as practicable.

Very respectfully, yours,

T. R. VAN INGEN,
THOMAS PALMER,
ALEX. HOLLAND.

From the Teachers of the Public Schools.

SCHENECTADY, October 8, 1846.

DEAR SIR: We have briefly examined HAZEN'S GRAMMATIC READERS (Nos. I. and II.), which you kindly presented to us, and believe that they are well calculated for the object which the author has in view. There can be no doubt that children will learn more rapidly a correct pronunciation of words, arranged according to this system, than they will in many of the books which we have in our schools. And there can be no reason why the first principles of grammar may not be taught at the same time that the scholar is learning to read. In short, we think the work worthy of the notice of the friends of popular education.

Respectfully, yours,
To Mr. FOSTER.

WM. G. CAW, J. V. CLUTE,
A. W. COX, M. VEEDER.

From the New York Evening Gazette and Times.

"J. S. Redfield, of Clinton Hall, has just published the GRAMMATIC READERS, Nos. I. and II., by EDWARD HAZEN, A. M., and we conceive them to be the most elegant books of juvenile instruction ever issued in this or any other country. The author's ability and qualifications for the task he has undertaken have been already shown in 'Hazen's Speller and Definer;' and a most satisfactory further development of his system of imparting an accurate knowledge of the elements of our vernacular will be found in the book now under notice. It is, however, to its typographical and illustrated character to which we referred, when speaking of the unsurpassed 'elegance' of this little school-book. It is printed on firm, thick paper, with handsome open type, and contains sixty-eight engravings, from original drawings by Chapman, which are among the most spirited sketches that ever came from the pencil of that accomplished artist; and these are engraved with a degree of skill and high finish that would best an illustrated edition of Gray or Goldsmith.

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